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POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Selected and Arranged
By Mr. Robert Browning

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1896

PREFATORY NOTE.

IN a recent "Memoir of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," by John H. Ingram, it is observed that "such essays on her personal history as have appeared, either in England or elsewhere, are replete with mistakes or misstatements.' For these he proposes to substitute "a correct if short memoir:" but, kindly and appreciative as may be Mr. Ingram's performance, there occur not a few passages in it equally "mistaken and misstated."

1. "Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward Moulton Barrett, was born in London on the 4th of March, 1809." Elizabeth was born, March 6, 1806, at Coxhoe Hall, county of Durham, the residence of her father.* "Before she was eleven she composed an epic on 'Marathon.'" She was then fourteen.

2. "It is said that Mr. Barrett was a man of intellect and culture, and therefore able to direct his daughter's education; but be that so or not, he obtained for her the tutorial assistance of the well-known Greek scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd . . . who was also a writer of fluent verse: and his influence and instruction doubtless confirmed Miss

* The entry in the Parish Register of Kelloe Church is as follows:—

Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett, daughter and first child of Edward Barrett Moulton Barrett, of Coxhoe Hall, native of St. James's, Jamaica, by Mary, late Clarke, native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was born, March 6th, 1806, and baptized 10th of February, 1808.

Barrett in her poetical aspirations." Mr. Boyd, early deprived of sight from over-study, resided at Malvern, and cared for little else than Greek literature, especially that of the "Fathers." He was about or over fifty, stooped a good deal, and was nearly bald. His daily habit was to sit for hours before a table, treating it as a piano with his fingers, and reciting Greek — his memory for which was such that, on a folio column of his favourite St. Gregory being read to him, he would repeat it without missing a syllable. Elizabeth, then residing in Herefordshire, visited him frequently, partly from her own love of Greek, and partly from a desire for the congenial society of one to whom her attendance might be helpful. There was nothing in the least "tutorial" in this relation —merely the natural feeling of a girl for a blind and disabled scholar in whose pursuits she took interest. Her knowledge of Greek was originally due to a preference for sharing with her brother Edward in the instruction of his Scottish tutor Mr. M'Swiney rather than in that of her own governess Mrs. Orme: and at such lessons she constantly assisted until her brother's departure for the Charter House—where he had Thackeray for a schoolfellow. In point of fact, she was self-taught in almost every respect. Mr. Boyd was no writer of "fluent verse," though he published an unimportant volume, and the literary sympathies of the friends were exclusively bestowed on Greek.

3. "Edward, the eldest of the family," was Elizabeth's younger by nearly two years. He and his companions perished, not "just off Teignmouth," but in Babbicombe Bay. The bodies drifted up channel, and were recovered three days after.

4. "Her father's fortune was considerably augmented by his accession to the property of his only brother Richard, for many years Speaker of the House of Assembly at Jamaica." Mr. Edward Moulton, by the will of his grandfather, was directed to affix the name of Barrett to that of Moulton, upon succeeding to the estates in Jamaica. Richard

was his cousin, and by his death Mr. Barrett did not acquire a shilling. His only brother was Samuel, sometime M.P. for Richmond. He had also a sister who died young, the full-length portrait of whom by Sir Thomas Lawrence (the first exhibited by that painter) is in the possession of Octavius Moulton-Barrett at Westover, near Calbourne, in the Isle of Wight. With respect to the "semi-tropical taste" of Mr. Barrett, so characterised in the "Memoir," it may be mentioned that, on the early death of his father, he was brought from Jamaica to England when a very young child, as a ward of the late Chief Baron Lord Abinger, then Mr. Scarlett, whom he frequently accompanied in his post-chaise when on Circuit. He was sent to Harrow, but received there so savage a punishment for a supposed offence ("burning the toast") by the youth whose "fag" he had become, that he was withdrawn from the school by his mother, and the delinquent was expelled. At the age of sixteen he was sent by Mr. Scarlett to Cambridge, and thence, for an early marriage, went to Northumberland. After purchasing the estate in Herefordshire, he gave himself up assiduously to the usual duties and occupations of a country gentleman,—farmed largely, was an active magistrate, became for a year High Sheriff, and in all county contests busied himself as a Liberal. He had a fine taste for landscape-gardening, planted considerably, loved trees —almost as much as his friend, the early correspondent of his daughter, Sir Uvedale Price—and for their sake discontinued keeping deer in the park.

Many other particulars concerning other people, in other "Biographical Memoirs which have appeared in England or elsewhere" for some years past, are similarly "mistaken and misstated:" but they seem better left without notice by anybody.

R. B.

29 De Vere Gardens, W.
December 10, 1887.

Dedication.

TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world; nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal depend-

ence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.—Your

E. B. B.

London, 50 Wimpole Street
1844.

PREFACE.

THE collection here offered to the public, consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my "Seraphim" and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression,—and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the "Drama of Exile," is the longest and most important work (to *me!*) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating "groan of the whole creation,"—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the

voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the Idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary Idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling, —and I, without, with my EXILES,—*I* also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath, did no harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer, who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation,—whereas

Milton's was his own by illustration only,—I appeal. To this analogy—*not* to this comparison, be it understood—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out, "Profane." Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the "Heavenly Love" among the persons of his drama, is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to "live by faith." There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word God were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the

Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me, that I have done that in reverence, from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the east, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב of Genesis, signifies a "mingling," and approaches the meaning of our "twilight" analytically. Apart from which considerations, my "exiles" are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them, are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the "Drama of Exile" in the collection, is the "Vision of Poets," in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea, is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature, than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called "la patience angélique du génie;" and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my "Seraphim" was received by the public with

more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since "we learn in suffering what we teach in song,"—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better,—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me:—and if I cry out too hopefully at sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults,—as I go forward to my critics and confess,—they have my heart and life in them,—they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work,—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being,—but as the completest expression of that being, to which I could attain,—and as work I offer it to the public,—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration,—but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done, should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

ADVERTISEMENT

PREFIXED TO EDITION OF COLLECTED WORKS PUBLISHED IN 1856.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

LONDON, 1856.

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A DRAMA OF EXILE.

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved.* ADAM *and* EVE *are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,
My exiled, my host!
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
Heaven's empire was lost.
Through the seams of her shaken foundations,
Smoke up in great joy!
With the smoke of your fierce exultations
Deform and destroy!
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
And darken the face
Of the white heavens and taunt them with changes
From glory and grace.
We, in falling, while destiny strangles,
Pull down with us all.
Let them look to the rest of their angels!
Who's safe from a fail?
HE saves not. Where's Adam? Can pardon
Requicken that sod?
Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
The image of God.

Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
Is God's sign that its bows not unto God,
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

Gabriel. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel!

Lucifer. Well, and if it be!
I CHOSE this ruin; I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to heaven,
And leave me to the earth, which is mine own
In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
In virtue of my revolt! turn thou from both
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood,
And spare to read us backward any more
Of the spent hallelujahs!

Gabriel. Spirit of scorn,
I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and space;
That who elects, assumes a something good
Which God made possible; that who lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .

Lucifer. Let it pass!
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I stand up
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for that,
My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou!*

Gabriel. I kneel.

Lucifer. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy heaven,
And leave my earth to me!

Gabriel. Through heaven and earth

God's will moves freely, and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love; His lightnings go abroad,
His pity may do so, His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,
I and my demons, who are spirits of scorn,
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignest angel of you all.

Gabriel. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise,
Hate but avenges.

Lucifer. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my grasp,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Hurled after to precipitate descent;
When countless angel faces still and stern
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight within your eyes,—'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!

Gabriel. Alas, discrowned one, by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All—save that truth and His love keeping it,—
To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars,

When their rays tremble round them with much song
Sung in more gladness !
Lucifer. Sing, my morning star !
Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved !
If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
What were it to this angel ?
Gabriel. What love is.
And now I have named God.
Lucifer. Yet, Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
Thou and I have not solved the problem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
That red-clay and a breath,—who must, forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his trees
And running in his rivers, to make glad
His soul made perfect ?—is it not for hope,
A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
Which affront heaven with their vacuity ?
Gabriel. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in heaven
To suit thy empty words. Glory and life
Fulfil their own depletions ; and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in
A compensative splendour up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries.
Lucifer. With a change !
So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too
Fill as may please you !—and be pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,

Am here and will not go ; while there, along
The light to which ye flash the desert out,
Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay
In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?
Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?

Lucifer. Ay : I know they have fled
Silent all day along the wilderness :
I know they wear, for burden on their backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them ; and I know
They dare not look in one another's face,—
As if each were a cherub!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?

Lucifer. Only as much as this :
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gabriel. Nothing more?

Lucifer. Why so the angels taunt! What should be more?

Gabriel. God is more.

Lucifer. Proving what?

Gabriel. That He is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

Lucifer. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin.

Gabriel. I charge thee by the memory of heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!

Lucifer. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

Gabriel. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,

When up against the white shore of our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God!

Lucifer. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

Gabriel. I charge thee by that mournful Morning Star
Which trembles . . . .

Lucifer. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I achieve my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS,

(*Chanting from Paradise, while* ADAM *and* EVE *fly across the Sword-glare.*)

Harken, oh harken! let your souls behind you
Turn, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
O lost, beloved!
Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels,
They press and pierce:
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
Voice throbs in verse.
We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden
A time ago:

God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden
To feed you so.
But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
No work to do,
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
The whole earth through.
Most ineradicable stains, for showing
(Not interfused !)
That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,
Than shall be used.
Harken, oh harken ! ye shall harken surely
For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
Of spirits' tears.
The yearning to a beautiful denied you,
Shall strain your powers.
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours.
In all your music, our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross ;
And all good gifts shall mind you of diviner,
With sense of loss.
We shall be near you in your poet-languors
And wild extremes,
What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
Or mock with dreams.
And when upon you, weary after roaming,
Death's seal is put,
By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,
Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
Soft and solemn in your hearing !
Oak and linden, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each still throbbing in vibration

Since that crowning of creation
When the God-breath spake abroad,
Let us make man like to God!
And the pine stood quivering
As the awful word went by,
Like a vibrant music-string
Stretched from mountain-peak to sky;
And the platan did expand
Slow and gradual, branch and head:
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand:
Grove and wood were swept aslant
In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight and the noonlight.
With a ruffling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances,
Never stirred by rain or breeze.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
Farewell! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-Spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
Hark the flow!

How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,
Of the banks
Where the willows and the deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,
As if all would drink at once
Where the living water runs!—
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges;
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams
With impassive eyes turned shoreward,
And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams!
Fare ye well, farewell!
The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
Farewell! the streams of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you;
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail.
I sit upon a cypress bough,
Close to the gate, and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
Over the gate and after you.

And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas,
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,
And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
And something abides, and something floats,
In the song which I sing after you.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before
Farewell! the birds of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng,
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom.
We call your thoughts home,—
Ye breathe our perfume,—
To the amaranth's splendour
Afire on the slopes;
To the lily-bells tender,
And grey heliotropes;
To the poppy-plains keeping
Such dream-breath and blee
That the angels there stepping
Grew whiter to see:
To the nook, set with moly,
Ye jested one day in,

Till your smile waxed too holy,
And left your lips praying :
To the rose in the bower-place,
That dripped o'er you sleeping ;
To the asphodel flower-place,
Ye walked ankle-deep in.
We pluck at your raiment,
We stroke down your hair,
We faint in our lament,
And pine into air.
Fare ye well, farewell !
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.
Farewell ! the flowers of Eden
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence.* ADAM *and* EVE *fly on and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark* Angel *passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?
Eve. Have I not strength to look up to thy face?
Adam. We need be strong : yon spectacle of cloud
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead ;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless ;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword

Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side, in pendulous horror slow
Across the stagnant ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this.
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side and overhead the gate,
Show like a glittering and sustainëd smoke
Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine
The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
Seeing that I now confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name! Sweet, punish me!
O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
My seed shall the first tempter's! strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden! and as HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recall
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground,

And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
As suits me, O my tempted!

Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My utter life and light! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we: God is just;
And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
It must be that His balance holds the weights
Of first and last sin on a level. What!
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee?

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
Might take thee into grace for scorning me;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin:
And so, the blessed angels might come down
And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—
Because I was not near to make them sad
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. Thou!

Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world,
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
The best gift last, the last sin was the worst,
Which sinned against more complement of gifts
And grace of giving. God! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbëd hands

And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this life
Within life, this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation!

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!
I, standing here between the glory and dark,
The glory of Thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs around
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness
Without her use in comfort!

Eve. Where is loss?
Am I in Eden? can another speak
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven which doth accuse,
And look away from earth which doth convict,
Into her face, and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love, and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds,
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed.
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know
Death's strength by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment
And leave thee lonely!

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay, and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me,
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard tight thought
Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Striking against each other—'O Lord God!'
('Twas so I prayed) 'I ask Thee by my sin,
'And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
'Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face
'And from the face of my beloved here
'For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
'Into the new dark mystery of death!
'I will lie still there, I will make no plaint,
'I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,
'Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun
'Where peradventure I might sin anew

'Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
'O death, whate'er it be, is good enough
'For such as I am: while for Adam here,
'No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,
'*It is not good for him to be alone.*'

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
And God did use it like a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be the first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes straight from heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—
But the love-angels, who came erst to us,
And when we said 'GOD,' fainted unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto God,
(As if He drew them inward in a breath)
His name being heard of them,—I think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
Invisible but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel!

Heaven assist the human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being unbeholden,
To be harkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
God hath shut between us,—
Us, His shining people,
You, who once have seen us
And are blinded new!
Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed.
We came as if the Heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare.
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud,
While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or oft, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,

We flashed our angel-splendour
In either human face.
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands
Breaking with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware!
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid-air.

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
Stood we in our wondering sight
In a mute apocalypse
With dumb vibrations on our lips
From hosannas ended,
And grand half-vanishings
Of the empyreal things
Within our eyes belated,
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from the Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opened into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
Of great joy to sympathy,
We sang out the morning
Broadening up the sky.
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
Informed with our intense Divine!
Interrupted vital notes
Palpitating hither, thither,
Burning out into the æther,
Sensible like fiery motes.

Or, whenever twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The globëd sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung!
While he, aweary, half in swoon
For joy to hear our climbing tune
Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and* LUCIFER *appears.*

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam! hold
My right hand strongly! It is Lucifer—
And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
And leave us to the desert thou hast made
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime
Athwart this path kept holy to our tears!
Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Lucifer. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve
Who thought me once part worthy of her ear
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And down from her white heights of womanhood
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear

To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn,
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Lucifer. Our new gods, it seems,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery
From all the wandering visions of the world,
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Lucifer. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly! [*Aside.*

Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed
When we were happy by them. So, depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek

To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face,
To find there the communion of the dust
And issue of the dust.—Go!

Adam. At once, go!

Lucifer. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what a thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
To-day—what?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say!

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. Thou! The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes
Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
Under the eyes of God.

Lucifer. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else. Verily, I think
Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely, but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin!

Lucifer. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I knew:
Now I know that thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Lucifer. Because?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million years,
Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Lucifer. Who is high and bold—
Be it said passing!—of a good red clay

Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower
Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!
Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,
And class these present dogmas with the rest
Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits
And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone.—Go!

Lucifer. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!
In Heaven they said so, and at Eden's gate,
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!
And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Lucifer. Nothing more?

Eve. I think, no more.

Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest more
Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word
Which thrilled behind us, God Himself being moved
When that august work of a perfect shape,
His dignities of sovran angel-hood,
Swept out into the universe,—divine
With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.
Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown—
I do not know. What is this thought or thing
Which I call beauty? is it thought, or thing?
Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my perceptions reel
For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty, I call love.
The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colourless,
Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,
Without its black and green, being all a blank,—
So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee.

And what collateral love moves on with thee;
Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love! what is Love? I lose it. Beauty and love!
I darken to the image. Beauty—love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature, dizzies me:
And, hark! the starry harmony remote
Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so! By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death.

Adam. Or rather by the life of the Lord God!
How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulation.*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away and vanishes as it proceeds.

Mine orbëd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
I loved thee with the fiery love of stars
Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbëd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.
Ah, ah!
Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,
And flooded me with radiance overmuch
From thy pure height.
Ah, ah!
Thou, with calm, floating pinions both way spread,
Erect, irradiated,
Didst sting my wheel of glory
On, on before thee
Along the Godlight by a quickening touch!
Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean
I swam expanding with delirious fire !
Around, around, around, in blind desire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—
Ha, ha !

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,
To a dim whirl of languor and delight,
I wound in girant orbits smooth and white
With that intense rapidity.
Around, around,
I wound and interwound,
While all the cyclic heavens about me spun.
Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one :
And as they wound I wound,—around, around,
In a great fire I almost took for God.
Ha, ha, Heosphoros !

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee !
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me !
Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou.
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.
I am strange—I am slow.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be

The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.
Ah, ah!
When, having wept all night, at break of day
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey:
Ah, ah!
And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?
Eve. Nay.
Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a sound,
And shapes which have no certainty of shape
Drift duskly in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve. O life
Which is not man's nor angel's! What is this?
Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beside.
Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and space
Or ever she knew sin.
Adam. We will not fear:
We were brave sinning.
Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to heaven and seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not GOD.
My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.
Adam. Night is near.
Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back
And stand within the sword-glare till we die,
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.
Adam. Nay, beloved!
We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple: we must wait
Until He gives death as He gave us life,
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.
Eve. Ah, ah! dost thou discern what I behold?
Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes
From their dilated orbits bound before
To meet the spectral Dread!
Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah! the twilight bristles wild with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
How near they reach . . . and far! How grey they move—
Treading upon the darkness without feet,
And fluttering on the darkness without wings!
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground;
Some keep one path, like sheep; some rock like trees;
Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some flow on
Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire ;
And some coil . . .
Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou pause to say
Like what ?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of his height
And writhed, and could not climb against the curse,
Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
That didst permit the angels to go home
And live no more with us who are not pure,
Save *us* too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
As *we* are in the purest ! Pity us—
Us too ! nor shut us in the dark, away
From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such through the precedence
Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not
To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,
Which are the more distraught and full of pain
And weak of apprehension !
Adam. Courage, Sweet !
The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation, till the throng
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand
Which sweep out and around us vastily
And hold us in a circle and a calm.
Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow ! there are twelve.
Thou who didst name all lives, hast names for these ?
Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,

Which rounds us with a visionary dread,
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
In fantasque apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
The terror of the shadows,—what is known
Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion, albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane.
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.
A bull stands hornëd here with gibbous glooms;
And a ram likewise: and a scorpion writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the dark.
This way a goat leaps with wild blank of beard;
And here, fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out quick rhythms along the shallow air.
While images more human——

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou!*
Two phantasms of two men!

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives,—resuming, so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labour.* Dost thou see
That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen;
But look off to those small humanities†
Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood
Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand.
They lean together! I would gaze on them
Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,
As the stars do in watching anything,
Should light them forward from their outline vague
To clear configuration—

* Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Two Spirits, *of organic and inorganic nature, arise from the ground.*

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,
And thrust me into horror, back from hope!

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces! with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound!
How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail
Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us,—whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament,
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.
God spake me softly out among the stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth;
And then, His smile did follow unawares,
That all things fashioned so for use and duty
Might shine anointed with His chrism of beauty—
Yet I wail!
I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall;
Individual aspect and complexity
Of giratory orb and interval
Lost in the fluent motion of delight

Toward the high ends of Being beyond sight—
Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming.
And tasted in each drop within the measure
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—
Yet I wail!
What a full hum of life around His lips
Bore witness to the fulness of creation!
How all the grand words were full-laden ships
Each sailing onward from enunciation
To separate existence,—and each bearing
The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing!
Yet I wail!

Eve. They wail, beloved! they speak of glory and God,
And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
Into the lap of silence.

Adam. Hark, again!

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
My joy stood up within me bold to add
A word to God's,—and, when His work was full,
To 'very good,' responded 'very glad!'
Filtered through roses, did the light enclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—
Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers: I rejoiced
In my young tumbling lions rolled together:
My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised
Then dipped his antlers through the golden weather

In the same ripple which the alligator
Left in his joyous troubling of the water—
Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
What wordless triumph did your voices render!
O mountain-summits, where the angels stood
And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour!
How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were worthy!
Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes!
My horses—my ground-eagles, for swift fleeing!
My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,
My calm cold fishes of a silver being,
How happy were ye, living and possessing,
O fair half-souls capacious of full blessing!
Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge to-day,
Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers
By God's sword at your backs! I lent my clay
To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers.
And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured?
Accursed transgressors! down the steep ye hasten,—
Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I wail?
I had no part in your transgression—none.
My roses on the bough did bud not pale,
My rivers did not loiter in the sun;
I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre
Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter?—
Do I wail?

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded!
My nightingale sang sweet without a fault,
My gentle leopards innocently bounded.
We were obedient. What is this convulses
Our blameless life with pangs and fever pulses?
And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angel's swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like
The ragged foam along the ocean-waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against each other;
The elements moan 'round me—'Mother, mother'—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
That we should fall from bliss as ye from duty?

Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,
Inferior creatures but still innocent,
Be salutation from a guilty mouth,
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge
Such as the heavens have made you. Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak—
I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?
I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
My king, if not the world's?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—
. . . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!
I pray you humbly in the name of God,
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more!
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,

That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales
Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,—
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river wells
Work out their bubbling mysteries underground,—
And all the birds sing, till for joy of song
They lift their trembling wings as if to heave
The too-much weight of music from their heart
And float it up the æther. I am 'ware
That these things I can no more apprehend
With a pure organ into a full delight,—
The sense of beauty and of melody
Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,
But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed
By my percipiency of sin and fall
In melancholy of humiliant thoughts.
But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
Must evermore subdue me,—be content!
Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick
As watering dews of Eden, unreproached;
And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
And peradventure better while more sad.
For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,
It will not be amiss in you who kept
The law of your own righteousness, and keep

The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this,
From joy of place, and also right of wail,
'I wail' being not for me—only 'I sin.'
Look to it, O sweet Spirits!
For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it became
Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
Along our swarded garden, but the grass
Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive
With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
Because I stood there? Could I turn to look
With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
Angel or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much woe, to cry 'alas!'
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this
Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits!
Our God, who is the enemy of none
But only of their sin, hath set your hope

And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
Show reverence, then, and never bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme reproach,—
Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us
Of sovranty by reason and freewill,
Sinning against the province of the Soul
To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
And pass out from her presence with no words!

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart!
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,
And let me speak, for, not being innocent,
It little doth become me to be proud,
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promise set upon me, that henceforth
Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happiness—
Happy, as I have said, to look around,
Clear to look up!—And now! I need not speak—
Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,
Because ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making! Alas,—peace foregone,
Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that best
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
What word metes absolute loss? let absolute loss
Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world:
I, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers;
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,

Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, 'God,'
And hear Him make reply, 'What is thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day?'

Adam. Eve!

Eve. *I*, at last,
Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him. And, so, pity us,
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,
With boughs on both sides! In the shade of which
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our brows;
And stroking with mild airs, our harmless hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER *rises in the circle.*

Lucifer. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
Who taught you disobedience. Look around;—
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk, unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again and talked!
What are your words to them? your grief to them?
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,

That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Lucifer. Ay, that is true. The clay-king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. And certes, *that* is true.
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou universe,
That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ah, ah, Heosphoros! Heosphoros!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God
And could not see Him. Wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!

Earth Spirits. We all wail!

Lucifer (*after a pause*). Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour,
A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
And his mane listening. When the ended curse
Left silence in the world, right suddenly
He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce,
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,

One after one, did mutter a response
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height
Into the dusk of pines.

Adam. It might have been.
I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. That lion is the type of what I am.
And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
And roared, O Adam—comprehending doom,
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here between the Heavens and Earth
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
Which damn me to this depth.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Lucifer. I scorn you that ye wail,
Who use your pretty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
Marble to marble, from my heart to heaven,
A monument of anguish to transpierce
And overtop your vapoury complaints
Expressed from feeble woes.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. For, O ye heavens, ye are my witnesses,
That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,
The outcast and the mildew of things good,
The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest alike

Say, go from us—we have no need of thee,—
Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
His blessing for chief angels on my head
Until it grew there, a crown crystallized!
Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as 'Gabriel'—
Lucifer—soft as 'Michael!' while serene
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered 'my Father,' innocent of shame
And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
White angels in your niches,—I repent,
And would tread down my own offences back
To service at the footstool? *that's* read wrong!
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,
Against the sides of this prodigious pit
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs
In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
It is but a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
Strewn woolly soft with promise! If ye have sinned,
Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye have grieved,
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
The power to die disproves the right to grieve.
Go to! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,
Hated and tempted and undone of me,—

Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
The hand that wields it.
Go! I curse you all.
Hate one another—feebly—as ye can!
I would not certes cut you short in hate,
Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,
And lifting up their brownness show beneath
The branches bare. Beseech you, spirits, give
To Eve who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the heavens, I trow,
For justice' sake gave theirs.
I curse you both,
Adam and Eve. Say grace as after meat,
After my curses! May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
And yet rejoice! Increase and multiply,
Ye in your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
And hideous forms of life and fears of death,—
The thought of death being alway eminent,
Immoveable and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
And HE find no redemption—nor the wing
Of seraph move your way; and yet rejoice!
Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,
This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate

Which glares without, because it burns within—
Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
To God and His reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe
With the great woe of striving against Love—
And gasp for space amid the Infinite,
And toss for rest amid the Desertness,
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony
Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate love,
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the past and damning the To come—
Go and rejoice! I curse you. [LUCIFER *vanishes.*

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
Which can lean to you aright.
When your bodies take the guerdon
Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you:
Then ye shall not move an eyelid
Though the stars look down your eyes;
And the earth which ye defilëd,
Shall expose you to the skies,—
Lo! these kings of ours, who sought to comprehend you.'

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain.
Unresistedly and coldly
I will smite you with my rain.
From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,

He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
O'er the noble human heart.
Give him counsel against losing of that Eden!

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife,
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though undone,
Not unmade for love and life.
Lo! ye utter threats in vain.
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire,
By the pinings which disclose
That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose,
We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved! If these be low,
We confront them from no height.
We have stooped down to their level
By infecting them with evil,
And their scorn that meets our blow
Scathes aright.
Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.
We shall triumph—triumph greatly
When ye lie beneath the sward.
There, our lily shall grow stately
Though ye answer not a word,
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence:
While your throne ascending calmly
We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean roll,
By the thoughts that throbbed within you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will,
And the grandeur of your spirit
Shall our broad savannahs fill;
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing.
Even your parlance which inveigles,
By our rudeness shall be won.
Hearts poetic in our eagles
Shall beat up against the sun
And strike downward in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth
With his thunderous jaw shall wield.
Your high fancies, shall our Mammoth
Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of Saint Michael at God's throne, who waits to speed him:
Till the heavens' smooth-groovëd thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them clear,
And the angels, smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
Shall cry, 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye exceed him.'

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary ground!
Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by these.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in these.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth, and my heart
Has beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full
As when I plucked it. *Is* it?—ye may see!
I cast it down to you that ye may see.

All of you!—count the petals lost of it,
And note the colours fainted! ye may see!
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth,
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-zodiac, filling the circle with its presence; and then wailing off into the east, carries the rose away with it.* EVE *falls upon her face.* ADAM *stands erect.*

Adam. So, verily,
The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me, 'Do not die,'
And I replied, 'O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'
But now it is no choice of mine to die:
My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back!
Death's consummation crowns completed life,
Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee
For others, if for others then for thee,—
For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-rose, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves
To feel the mystic wind—hark!

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive

Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve,
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which with pulses manifold
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
At the lifting of the anchor:
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain!
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain!
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine!
For is all laughed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing, of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing out

Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life!

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life?
Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near,—
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

[EVE *sinks down again.*

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily
To view God without a stain;
Till, recoiling where the shade is,
We retread our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades
To resume man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.

'Wilt thou be one with me?'
'I will be one with thee.'
'Ha, ha!—we love and live!'
Alas! ye love and die.
Shriek—who shall reply?
For is it not loved in vain?

Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.
O we live, O we live—
And this life we would survive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain.
Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain. [*Voices die away.*

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity
Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. O Spirits! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,
In gliding waters under lily leaves,
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest with feet and wings,—
Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits. Agreed, allowed!
We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus, and thus!
Harken, O harken to us!

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from the norland,
As the snow-wind beats blindly on the moorland,
As the simoom drives hot across the desert,
As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,
As the torrent tears the ocean-world to atoms,
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below fathoms,
Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,
As the tiger, in the jungle crouching stilly,
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,
As the vultures, that scream against the thunder,
As the owlets, that sit and moan asunder,
Thus,—and thus !

Eve. Adam ! God !

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits !
By the power in me of the sovran soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angels' march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience. I am king of you !

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha ! thou art king !
With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone !
Thou, the antagonized,
Tortured and agonized,
Held in the ring
Of the zodiac !
Now, king, beware !
We are many and strong
Whom thou standest among,—
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where

Thou wouldst trample us down
From rights of our own
To an utter wrong—
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn,
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee! I make appeal
Unto Thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God!—My seed, my seed,
There is hope set on THEE—I cry to Thee,
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be!—leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
Fallen in debasement below thunder-mark,
A mark for scorning—taunted and perplext
By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom Thou, Lord, rulest alway! O my Seed,
Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,
Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of* CHRIST *appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth Spirits grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. I AM HERE!

Adam. This is God!—Curse us not, God, any more!

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—
To the low height of some good angel's feet,
For such to tread on when he walketh straight
And Thy lips praise him!

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
And cruel and unmitigated blame

Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned;
And true their sin is reckoned into loss
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
With instincts and imperious sanctities
From self-defacement? Which of you disdains
These sinners who in falling proved their height
Above you by their liberty to fall?
And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
Devouring,—tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, 'Why, God, hast Thou made us thus?'
And pining to a sallow idiocy
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,
Then stagnate into rottenness and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you
Receive man's sceptre!—therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And function in you, to the human hand!
Be ye to man as angels are to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,

Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest! So at last,
He shall look round on you with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,
And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you when he sings his open songs
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you
Of purifying sweetness, and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies
Which glorify you into soul from sense.
Go, serve him for such price! That not in vain
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through the peace
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ! Albeit Thou bless me not
In set words, I am blessed in harkening Thee—
Speak, Christ!

CHRIST. Speak, Adam! Bless the woman, man!
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence! Lo, my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name,
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, arise, aspire
To all the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth. Raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world! Rise, woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness
The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—
Some pang paid down for each new human life,
Some weariness in guarding such a life,
Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
Too loyally some treason; feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,
And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich,
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong;

Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close,
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,
I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out,
And by the blessed nightingale which threw
Its melancholy music after us,—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,
I bless thee to the contraries of these,
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to their END
Of Death and the hereafter.

Eve. . . . . . I accept
For me and for my daughters this high part
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,
And in the place of Eden's lost delight
Worthy endurance of permitted pain;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.

Shall it be so? shall I smile, saying so?
O Seed! O King! O God, who *shall* be seed,—
What shall I say? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt Thy love and power!
And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden! now, for the first time
Since God said 'Adam,' walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illume it, holdest Heaven
Broadly over our heads.

[*The* CHRIST *is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun!

Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ!

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
Diviner, with the possible of death.
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ!

Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls,
As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne
In a pathetical, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other!

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon!

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes
And grand dim lips that murmur evermore
God, God, God! while the rush of life and death.

The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,
The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamental waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterated sound of—GOD!
Which WORD, innumerous angels straightway lift
Wide on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly, shutting the last notes
In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon of time
Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
'God! why hast Thou forsaken me, my God?'
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies, yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and face!

Eve. My nature overcomes me from Thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time, shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements,
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee!
I thank Thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which being sustained, shall neither break nor burn

Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs
I will confront your sins ; and since those sins
Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,
The tears of my clean soul shall follow them
And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
Your discrowned human nature. Look on me !
As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
So shall I lift up in my piercëd hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief
The whole creation. Henceforth in my name
Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !
Your graves shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts ;
And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony
And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
First sinners and first mourners ! Live and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowlily !
Live and work, strongly,—because patiently !
And, for the deed of death, trust it to God
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss ! And thence, with constant prayers
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of* CHRIST *vanishes.* ADAM *and* EVE *stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade,*

as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (*as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it*) *accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We our homage-oath, once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing;
And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;
Here, we promise milder duty:
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organise in beauty
A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us,
If this mortal and unholy
We still fail to cast out from us.
If we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm-trees,
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our gum-trees and our balm-trees,
And if your souls all mournfully sit down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us!
We are gentle in our languor:
Much more good ye shall have near us
Than any pain or anger,
And our God's refracted blessing in our blessing shall be given.

By the desert's endless vigil
We will solemnize your passions,
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature,
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death and straight and slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you
Where no summer heats shall dazzle,
Strewing on you and beside you
Thyme and rosemary and basil,
And the yew-tree shall grow overhead to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us running,
Whereby, newly consecrated
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company which purer worlds assemble:

While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels,
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,
And the rays around his feet beneath your sobbing lips shall tremble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac has broken like a belt, and is dissolved from the desert. The* Earth Spirits *vanish, and the stars shine out above.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM *and* EVE *advance into the desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion!
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation.
As a fish or bird
Swims or flies, if moving,
We unseen are heard
To live on by loving.
Far above the glances
Of your eager eyes,
Listen! we are loving.
Listen, through man's ignorances.
Listen, through God's mysteries.
Listen down the heart of things.—
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.
Through the opal door
Listen evermore
How we live by loving!

First semichorus.

When your bodies therefore
Reach the grave their goal,
Softly will we care for
Each enfranchised soul.
Softly and unlothly
Through the door of opal
Toward the heavenly people,
Floated on a minor fine
Into the full chant divine,
We will draw you smoothly,—
While the human in the minor
Makes the harmony diviner.
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

There, a sough of glory
Shall breathe on you as you come,
Ruffling round the doorway
All the light of angeldom.
From the empyrean centre
Heavenly voices shall repeat,
'Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
For the chrism on you is sweet!'
And every angel in the place
Lowlily shall bow his face,
Folded fair on softened sounds,
Because upon your hands and feet
He images his Master's wounds.
Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
Consummated undoing,
Our seraphs of white mercies
Shall hover round the ruin.
Their wings shall stream upon the flame
As if incorporate of the same
In elemental fusion;
And calm their faces shall burn out
With a pale and mastering thought,
And a steadfast looking of desire
From out between the clefts of fire,—
While they cry, in the Holy's name,
To the final Restitution.
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
To the thick graves accompted,
Awaking the dead bodies
The angel of the trumpet

Shall split and shatter the earth
To the roots of the grave
Which never before were slackened,
And quicken the charnel birth
With his blast so clear and brave
That the dead shall start and stand erect,
And every face of the burial-place
Shall the awful, single look reflect
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death.
He will leap up wild at the clamour
Above and beneath.
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha!
To the trumpet's blare,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And ghastlily champeth the last moon-ray—
What angel there
Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
One more bright than seraph crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold,
Elder, too, than angel old,
By his grey eternities.
He shall master and surprise
The steed of Death.
For He is strong, and He is fain.
He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where He will,

With a whisper in the ear,
Full of fear,
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where the souls assemble
He will guide the Death-steed calm between their ranks,
While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades where the dreary shade is,
Up the steep of heaven will the Tamer guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles, circle above circle,
We who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with tolling hoofs shall travel,
Ashen grey the planets shall be motionless as stones,
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons:
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
From the horse's nostrils shall steam the blurting breath:
Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne;
'Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
With a hand nail-piercëd, I who am Thy Son.'
Then the Eye Divinest, from the deepest, flaming,
On the mystic courser shall look out in fire:
Blind the beast shall stagger where It overcame him,

Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in desire.
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the breath,
Listen down the heart of things!
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.

A Voice from below. Gabriel, thou Gabriel!

A Voice from above. What wouldst *thou* with me?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song
And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me!

First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my Morning Star
And had no answer? All the stars are out,
And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of *my* Star shut in light behind the sun.
No more reply than from a breaking string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?
Where *is* my Star—my Star? Have ye cast down
Her glory like my glory? has she waxed
Mortal, like Adam? has she learnt to hate
Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee.
All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Angel Chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy!
By the Actual's tension
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension!
From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you:
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you!

God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims?
That HE claims THAT too?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile from his heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile by his will,
As I by mine election?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That *I* shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient Star will give
Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star' to HIM,—
And take the fairness of his virtue back
To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. UNtrue. UNtrue! O Morning-Star, O MINE,
Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.
[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*
All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

Angel Chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger,

Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's
God is the Discharger,
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden
In a light exceeding:
What their rays have measured
Let your feet fulfil!
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden,
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still!

Chorus.

Future joy and far light
Working such relations,
Hear us singing gently
Exiled is not lost!
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you,
Hope the uttermost!
Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

[*The stars shine on brightly while* ADAM *and* EVE *pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.*

THE SERAPHIM.

"I look for Angel's songs, and hear Him cry."
—GILES FLETCHER.

PART THE FIRST.

[*It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two* Seraphim, ADOR *the Strong and* ZERAH *the Bright One. The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.*]

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more!
Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.
Zerah. Of heaven!
Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—
Zerah. Are gone before.
Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore
To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands of fire,
Lie without touch or tone
Upon the glass-sea shore.
Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!
Ador. There the Shadow from the throne
Formless with infinity
Hovers o'er the crystal sea
Awfuller than light derived,
And red with those primæval heats
Whereby all life has lived.
Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly seats!
Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,
Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent has died
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.
Immeasurable space spreads magnified
With that thick life, along the plane
The worlds slid out on. What a fall
And eddy of wings innumerous, crossed
By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed
On every prostrate angel's head!
What gleaming up of hands that fling
Their homage in retorted rays,
From high instinct of worshipping,
And habitude of praise!

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.
Pointed palm and wing and hair
Indistinguishable show us
Only pulses in the air
Throbbing with a fiery beat,
As if a new creation heard
Some divine and plastic word,
And trembling at its new-found being,
Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for seeing!
His voice, his, that thrills us so
As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,
Behold the Holy in his woe!
And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne
In hierarchical degree,
What time the voice said *Go!*
And whether I was moved alone
By the tsorm-pathos of the tone
Which swept through heaven the alien name of *woe*,
Or whether the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding wings,

Bearing to my finite essence
Incapacious of their presence,
Infinite imaginings,
None knoweth save the Throned who spoke;
But I who at creation stood upright
And heard the God-breath move
Shaping the words that lightened, 'Be there light,'
Nor trembled but with love,
Now fell down shudderingly,
My face upon the pavement whence I had towered,
As if in mine immortal overpowered
By God's eternity.

Zerah. Let me wait!—let me wait!—

Ador. Nay, gaze not backward through the gate!
God fills our heaven with God's own solitude
Till all the pavements glow.
His Godhead being no more subdued
By itself, to glories low
Which seraphs can sustain,
What if thou, in gazing so,
Shouldst behold but only one
Attribute, the veil undone—
Even that to which we dare to press
Nearest, for its gentleness—
Ay, his love!
How the deep ecstatic pain
Thy being's strength would capture!
Without language for the rapture,
Without music strong to come
And set the adoration free,
For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
Amid the general chorus dumb,
God-stricken to seraphic agony.
Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
In vision bare should rise
The life-fount whence his hand did gather

With solitary force
Our immortalities!
Straightway how thine own would wither,
Falter like a human breath,
And shrink into a point like death,
By gazing on its source!—
My words have imaged dread.
Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
And dropt thy wings in languishment
Overclouding foot and face,
As if God's throne were eminent
Before thee, in the place.
Yet not—not so,
O loving spirit and meek, dost thou fulfil
The supreme Will.
Not for obeisance but obedience,
Give motion to thy wings! Depart from hence!
The voice said 'Go!'

Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
His will is as a spirit within my spirit,
A portion of the being I inherit.
His will is mine obedience. I resemble
A flame all undefilëd though it tremble;
I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!
O thou, who stronger art,
And standest ever near the Infinite,
Pale with the light of Light,
Love me, beloved! me, more newly made,
More feeble, more afraid;
And let me hear with mine thy pinions moved,
As close and gentle as the loving are,
That love being near, heaven may not seem so far.

Ador. I am near thee and I love thee.
Were I loveless, from thee gone,
Love is round, beneath, above thee,
God, the omnipresent one.

Spread the wing, and lift the brow!
Well-beloved, what fearest thou?
Zerah. I fear, I fear—
Ador. What fear?
Zerah. The fear of earth.
Ador. Of earth, the God-created and God-praised
In the hour of birth?
Where every night the moon in light
Doth lead the waters silver-faced?
Where every day the sun doth lay
A rapture to the heart of all
The leafy and reeded pastoral,
As if the joyous shout which burst
From angel lips to see him first,
Had left a silent echo in his ray?
Zerah. Of earth—the God-created and God-curst,
Where man is, and the thorn.
Where sun and moon have borne
No light to souls forlorn.
Where Eden's tree of life no more uprears
Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead
The yew-tree bows its melancholy head
And all the undergrasses kills and seres.
Ador. Of earth the weak,
Made and unmade?
Where men that faint, do strive for crowns that fade
Where, having won the profit which they seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the gold
With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold,
And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?
Zerah. Of earth the bold,
Where the blind matter wrings
An awful potence out of impotence,
Bowing the spiritual things
To the things of sense.
Where the human will replies

With ay and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or slow.
Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for revenge.
And the fearful mystery—

Ador. called Death?

Zerah. Nay, death is fearful,—but who saith
'To die,' is comprehensible.
What's fearfuller, thou knowest well,
Though the utterance be not for thee,
Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Ay! the cursed thing that moved
A shadow of ill, long time ago,
Across our heaven's own shining floor,
And when it vanished, some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign—were seen—were—never more.
Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee
Ever to this earth?

Zerah. Before.
When thrilling from His hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song
The earth was deathless, sorrowless.
Unfearing, then, pure feet might press
The grasses brightening with their feet,
For God's own voice did mix its sound
In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers' flowing round,
And the life-tree's waving soft.
Beautiful new earth and strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—the change?

Zerah. Nay, or wherefore should I fear
To look upon it now?
I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings

Of angels from an earthly mission,—
Strong one, even upon thy brow,
When, with task completed, given
Back to us in that transition,
I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band,
Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wast not one of those
Whom the loving Father chose
In visionary pomp to sweep
O'er Judæa's grassy places,
O'er the shepherds and the sheep,
Though thou art so tender?—dimming,
All the stars except one star
With their brighter kinder faces,
And using heaven's own tune in hymning,
While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,
'Peace upon earth, goodwill to man.'

Zerah. 'Glory to God. I said amen afar.
And those who from that earthly mission are,
Within mine ears have told
That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
With such a sweet and prodigal constraint
The meaning yet the mystery of the song
What time they sang it, on their natures strong,
That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness
And speaking the new peace in promises,
The love and pity made their voices faint
Into the low and tender music, keeping
The place in heaven of what on earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me!
I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,
And worship of the idol, 'stead of His·

Ador. Yea, peace, where He is.

Zerah. He!
Say it again.
Ador. Where He is.
Zerah. Can it be
That earth retains a tree
Whose leaves, like Eden foliage can be swayed
By the breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?
Ador. There is a tree!—it hath no leaf nor root;
Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:
Its shadow on His head is laid.
For He, the crownëd Son,
Has left His crown and throne,
Walks earth in Adam's clay,
Eve's snake to bruise and slay—
Zerah. Walks earth in clay?
Ador. And walking in the clay which He created,
He through it shall touch death.
What do I utter? what conceive? did breath
Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?
Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated
By the seven confluent Spirits?—Speak—answer me!
Who said man's victim was his deity?
Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from thee.
Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light
Above, below, around,
As putting thunder-questions without cloud,
Reverberate without sound,
To universal nature's depth and height.
The tremor of an inexpressive thought
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips;
And while thine hands are stretched above,
As newly they had caught
Some lightning from the Throne, or showed the Lord
Some retributive sword,

Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
And radiance, with contrasted wrath and love,
As God had called thee to a seraph's part,
With a man's quailing heart.
Ador. O heart—O heart of man!
O ta'en from human clay
To be no seraph's but Jehovah's own!
Made holy in the taking,
And yet unseparate
From death's perpetual ban,
And human feelings sad and passionate:
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain.
O heart of man—of God! which God has ta'en
From out the dust, with its humanity
Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,
And bade its many pulses beating lie
Beside that incommunicable stir
Of Deity wherewith He interwound it.
O man! and is thy nature so defiled
That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,
And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
For traitors who consigned it to such woe—
That all could cleanse thee not, without the flow
Of blood, the life-blood—*His*—and streaming *so?*
O earth the thundercleft, windshaken, where
The louder voice of 'blood and blood' doth rise,
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?
O heaven! O vacant throne!
O crownëd hierarchies that wear your crown
When His is put away!
Are ye unshamëd that ye cannot dim
Your alien brightness to be liker him,
Assume a human passion, and down-lay
Your sweet secureness for congenial fears,

And teach your cloudless ever-burning eyes
The mystery of his tears?
Zerah. I am strong, I am strong.
Were I never to see my heaven again,
I would wheel to earth like the tempest rain
Which sweeps there with an exultant sound
To lose its life as it reaches the ground.
I am strong, I am strong.
Away from mine inward vision swim
The shining seats of my heavenly birth,
I see but his, I see but him—
The Maker's steps on his cruel earth.
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet
To me, as trodden by his feet?
Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
As worn by him, begin to be
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing
For love and awe and ministering?
I am strong, I am strong.
By our angel ken shall we survey
His loving smile through his woeful clay?
I am swift, I am strong,
The love is bearing me along.
Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND.

[*Mid-air, above Judæa.* ADOR *and* ZERAH *are a little apart from the visible* angelic hosts.]

Ador. BELOVED! dost thou see?—
Zerah. Thee,—thee.
Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a star
Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay

Whereon thou lookest now.
The crown is fainting on thy brow
To the likeness of a cloud,
The forehead's self a little bowed
From its aspect high and holy,
As it would in meekness meet
Some seraphic melancholy:
Thy very wings that lately flung
An outline clear, do flicker here
And wear to each a shadow hung,
Dropped across thy feet.
In these strange contrasting glooms
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see?

Zerah. Even so; I see
Our empyreal company,
Alone the memory of their brightness
Left in them, as in thee.
The circle upon circle, tier on tier,
Piling earth's hemisphere
With heavenly infiniteness,
Above us and around,
Straining the whole horizon like a bow:
Their songful lips divorcëd from all sound,
A darkness gliding down their silvery glances,—
Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances
As if they heard God speak, and could not glow.

Ador. Look downward! dost thou see?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press *that* vision on my words?
Doth not earth speak enough
Of change and of undoing,
Without a seraph's witness? Oceans rough
With tempest, pastoral swards
Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,
That shake their piny heads, as who would say
'We are too beautiful for our decay'—
Shall seraphs speak of these things? Let alone
Earth to her earthly moan!
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but hers?
Ador. Hearest thou the attestation
Of the rousëd universe
Like a desert lion shaking
Dews of silence from its mane?
With an irrepressive passion
Uprising at once,
Rising up and forsaking
Its solemn state in the circle of suns,
To attest the pain
Of him who stands (O patience sweet!)
In his own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet?
Voice of all things. Is there no moan but ours?
Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,
O meek, insensate things,
O congregated matters! who inherit
Instead of vital powers,
Impulsions God-supplied;
Instead of influent spirit,
A clear informing beauty;
Instead of creature-duty,
Submission calm as rest.
Lights, without feet or wings,
In golden courses sliding!
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,
Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars!
Ye crystal, firmamental bars
That hold the skyey waters free
From tide or tempest's ecstasy!

Airs universal! thunders lorn
That wait your lightnings in cloud-cave
Hewn out by the winds! O brave
And subtle elements! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice with folly.*
Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its wound.
Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound.
Ador. Zerah!
Zerah. Wilt *thou* rebuke?
God hath rebuked me, brother. I am weak.
Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah! could I speak
Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.
Zerah. Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face.
Where shall I seek His?
I have thrown
One look upon earth, but one,
Over the blue mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and pines,
Over the harvest-lands golden,
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines—
He is not there.
All these are unworthy
Those footsteps to bear,
Before which, bowing down
I would fain quench the stars of my crown
In the dark of the earthy.
Where shall I seek him?
No reply?
Hath language left thy lips, to place
Its vocal in thine eye?
Ador, Ador! are we come
To a double portent, that

* "His angels He charged with folly."—*Job* iv. 18.

Dumb matter grows articulate
And songful seraphs dumb?
Ador, Ador!

Ador. I constrain
The passion of my silence. None
Of those places gazed upon
Are gloomy enow to fit his pain.
Unto him, whose forming word
Gave to Nature flower and sward,
She hath given back again
For the myrtle, the thorn,
For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.
Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze beneath!
There is a city——

Zerah. Temple and tower,
Palace and purple would droop like a flower,
(Or a cloud at our breath)
If he neared in his state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a king did the victim go!
And THOU who hangest mute of speech
'Twixt heaven and earth, with forehead yet
Stainëd by the bloody sweat,
God! man! Thou hast forgone thy throne in each.

Zerah. Thine eyes behold him?

Ador. Yea, below.
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart
And the vision rise!
Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three:
And mortals three that hang thereon
'Ghast and silent to the sun.

Round them blacken and welter and press
Staring multitudes whose father
Adam was, whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark,—
Who curse with looks. Nay—let me rather
Turn unto the wilderness!

Ador. Turn not! God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels, and they love.
Can these love? With the living's pride
They stare at those who die, who hang
In their sight and die. They bear the streak
Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside
When the victims' pang
Makes the dry wood creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels
The mid cross under,
With white lips asunder,
And motion on each.
They throb, as she feels,
With a spasm, not a speech;
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm, for the eyes
Have made room there to weep
Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,
All women, all men!
He sweated it, he,
For your pale womanhood
And base manhood. Agree
That these water-tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laughter.
Weep blood! Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the darkness, on roll

Forward, on from the strand of the storm-beaten years,
And back from the rocks of the horrid hereafter,
And up, in a coil, from the present's wrath-spring,
Yea, down from the windows of heaven opening,
Deep calling to deep as they meet on His soul—
And men weep only tears?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse!
And yet, Ador, perhaps
It is all that they can.
Tears! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all-givers need gifts?
If the Giver said 'Give,' the first motion would slay
Our Immortals, the echo would ruin away
The same worlds which he made. Why, what angel uplifts
Such a music, so clear,
It may seem in God's ear
Worth more than a woman's hoarse weeping? And thus,
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would speak,
Thou woman that weepest! weep unscorned of us!
I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,—and not of love
Or human or angelic! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme above,
In whose infinitude the secrecies
Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine hand
Exultant, saying, 'Lord God, I am wise!'—
Than utter *here*, 'I love.'

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender light,
The tears of heaven.

Ador. Of heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on!

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.
Ador. Unlike.
Zerah. For one
Is as a man who has sinned and still
Doth wear the wicked will,
The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change again.
Ador. And one—
Zerah. Has also sinned.
And yet, (O marvel !) doth the Spirit-wind
Blow white those waters ? Death upon his face
Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made :
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.
Ador. And ONE !—
Zerah. And ONE !—
Ador. Why dost thou pause ?
Zerah. God ! God !
Spirit of my spirit ! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning deity
To light the quenchless pulses !—
Ador. But hast trod
The depths of love in thy peculiar nature,
And not in any thou hast made and lovest
In narrow seraph hearts !—
Zerah. Above, Creator !
Within, Upholder !
Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice !
Zerah. Why do I pause ?—
Ador. There is a silentness
That answers thee enow,

That, like a brazen sound
Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round,—
Hear it. It is not from the visible skies
Though they are still,
Unconscious that their own dropped dews express
The light of heaven on every earthly hill.
It is not from the hills, though calm and bare
They, since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place
Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,
And whence again shall come
The word that uncreates,
Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation.
It is not from the places that entomb
Man's dead, though common Silence there dilates
Her soul to grand proportions, worthily
To fill life's vacant room.
Not there: not there.
Not yet within those chambers lieth He,
A dead one in his living world; his south
And west winds blowing over earth and sea,
And not a breath on that creating mouth.
But now,—a silence keeps
(Not death's, nor sleep's)
The lips whose whispered word
Might roll the thunders round reverberated.
Silent art thou, O my Lord,
Bowing down thy stricken head!
Fearest thou, a groan of thine
Would make the pulse of thy creation fail
As thine own pulse?—would rend the veil
Of visible things and let the flood
Of the unseen Light, the essential God,
Rush in to whelm the undivine?
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread.

Zerah. O silence!
Ador. Doth it say to thee—the NAME,
Slow-learning seraph?
Zerah. I have learnt.
Ador. The flame
Perishes in thine eyes.
Zerah. He opened his,
And looked. I cannot bear—
Ador. Their agony?
Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them. From his brows
White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?
He is God, seraph! Look no more on me,
O God—I am not God.
Ador. The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.
In heaven we could sustain them.
Zerah. Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns
In fluent, refluent motion
Along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps between
The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet sound
The winding, wandering music that returns
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round
Of everlasting praises;
The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,
Visibly flashing from the súpreme throne
Full in seraphic faces
Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with worship and delight—
My heaven! my home of heaven! my infinite
Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,

Where God's immortal love now issueth
In this MAN'S woe?
Ador. His eyes are very deep yet calm.
Zerah. No more
On *me*, Jehovah-man—
Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil. They are seeing
No earth, no heaven, no men that slay and curse,
No seraphs that adore;
Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread,
The things we cannot view or think or speak,
Because we are too happy, or too weak,—
The sea of ill, for which the universe
With all its pilëd space, can find no shore,
With all its life, no living foot to tread.
But he, accomplished in Jehovah-being,
Sustains the gaze adown,
Conceives the vast despair,
And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,
Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all be finished.
Zerah. Thus, do I find Thee thus? My undiminished
And undiminishable God!—my God!
The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the latest song
Thy manifested glory swept abroad
In rushing past our lips: they echo aye
'Creator, thou art strong!
Creator, thou art blessed over all.'
By what new utterance shall I now recall,
Unteaching the heaven-echoes? dare I say,
'Creator, thou art feebler than thy work!
Creator, thou art sadder than thy creature!
A worm, and not a man,
Yea, no worm, but a curse?'
I dare not so mine heavenly phrase reverse.
Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-fork
Whose seed disordered ran

From Eve's hand trembling when the curse did reach her)
Be garnered darklier in thy soul, the rod
That smites thee never blossoming, and thou
Grief-bearer for thy world, with unkinged brow—
I leave to men their song of Ichabod:
I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.
Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise
The passion-song of blood.
Zerah. . . . . And *we*, extend
Our holy vacant hands towards the Throne,
Crying 'We have no music.'
Ador. Rather, blend
Both musics into one.
The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,
Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath
And breathe the full thanksgiving.
Zerah. But the love—
The love, mine Ador!
Ador. Do we love not?
Zerah. Yea,
But not as man shall! not with life for death,
New-throbbing through the startled being; not
With strange astonished smiles, that ever may
Gush passionate like tears and fill their place:
Nor yet with speechless memories of what
Earth's winters were, enverduring the green
Of every heavenly palm
Whose windless, shadeless calm
Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.
Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face,—
Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore
In our behalf, and tender evermore
With nature all our own, upon us gazing—
Nor yet with these forgiving hands upraising

Their unreproachful wounds, alone to bless!
Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less
Than mortals shall?
Ador. Amen! so let it be.
We love in our proportion, to the bound
Thine infinite our finite set around,
And that is finitely,—thou, infinite
And worthy infinite love! And our delight
Is, watching the dear love poured out to thee
From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,
Who love thee more than we do: blessed we,
Viewing that love which shall exceed even this,
And winning in the sight a double bliss
For all so lost in love's supremacy.
The bliss is better. Only on the sad
Cold earth there are who say
It seemeth better to be great than glad.
The bliss is better. Love him more, O man,
Than sinless seraphs can!
Zerah. Yea, love him more!
Voices of the angelic multitude. Yea, more!
Ador. The loving word
Is caught by those from whom we stand apart.
For silence hath no deepness in her heart
Where love's low name low breathed would not be heard
By angels, clear as thunder.
Angelic voices. Love him more!
Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make!
Albeit to love there were not ever given
A mournful sound when uttered out of heaven,
That angel-sadness ye would fitly take.
Of love be silent now! we gaze adown
Upon the incarnate Love who wears no crown.
Zerah. No crown! the woe instead
Is heavy on his head,

Pressing inward on his brain
With a hot and clinging pain
Till all tears are prest away.
And clear and calm his vision may
Peruse the black abyss.
No rod, no sceptre is
Holden in his fingers pale;
They close instead upon the nail,
Concealing the sharp dole,
Never stirring to put by
The fair hair peaked with blood,
Drooping forward from the rood
Helplessly, heavily
On the cheek that waxeth colder,
Whiter ever, and the shoulder
Where the government was laid.
His glory made the heavens afraid;
Will he not unearth this cross from its hole?
His pity makes his piteous state;
Will he be uncompassionate
Alone to his proper soul?
Yea, will he not lift up
His lips from the bitter cup,
His brows from the dreary weight,
His hand from the clenching cross,
Crying, 'My Father, give to me
Again the joy I had with thee
Or ere this earth was made for loss?'
No stir: no sound.
The love and woe being interwound
He cleaveth to the woe;
And putteth forth heaven's strength below,
To bear.

Ador. And that creates his anguish now,
Which made his glory there.

Zerah. Shall it need be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold.
Thou, uttered forth of old
In all thy life-emotion,
In all thy vernal noises,
In the rollings of thine ocean,
Leaping founts, and rivers running,—
In thy woods' prophetic heaving
Ere the rains a stroke have given,
In thy winds' exultant voices
When they feel the hills anear,
In the firmamental sunning,
And the tempest which rejoices
Thy full heart with an awful cheer.
Thou, uttered forth of old
And with all thy music rolled
In a breath abroad
By the breathing God,—
Awake! He is here! behold!
Even *thou*—
beseems it good
To thy vacant vision dim,
That the deadly ruin should,
For thy sake, encompass him?
That the Master-word should lie
A mere silence, while his own
Processive harmony,
The faintest echo of his lightest tone,
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?
Awake! emit a cry!
And say, albeit used
From Adam's ancient years
To falls of acrid tears,
To frequent sighs unloosed,
Caught back to press again
On bosoms zoned with pain—
To corses still and sullen

The shine and music dulling
With closëd eyes and ears
That nothing sweet can enter,
Commoving thee no less
With that forced quietness
Than the earthquake in thy centre—
Thou hast not learnt to bear
This new divine despair!
These tears that sink into thee,
These dying eyes that view thee,
This dropping blood from lifted rood,
They darken and undo thee.
Thou canst not presently sustain this corse—
Cry, cry, thou hast not force!
Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep
Thy hopeless charnels deep,
Thyself a general tomb
Where the first and the second Death
Sit gazing face to face
And mar each other's breath,
While silent bones through all the place
'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten
And seem to lie and listen
For the tramp of the coming Doom.
Is it not meet
That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,
Should champ the ashes?
That they who wrap them in the thunder-cloud
Should wear it as a shroud,
Perishing by its flashes?
That they who vexed the lion, should be rent?
Cry, cry 'I will sustain my punishment,
The sin being mine; but take away from me
This visioned Dread—this Man—this Deity!'

The Earth. I have groaned; I have travailed: I am weary.
I am blind with my own grief, and cannot see,

As clear-eyed angels can, his agony,
And what I see I also can sustain,
Because his power protects me from his pain.
I have groaned ; I have travailed : I am dreary,
Harkening the thick sobs of my children's heart :
How can I say 'Depart'
To that Atoner making calm and free?
Am I a God as he,
To lay down peace and power as willingly?
Ador. He looked for some to pity. There is none.
All pity is within him and not for him.
His earth is iron under him, and o'er him
His skies are brass.
His seraphs cry 'Alas'
With hallelujah voice that cannot weep.
And man, for whom the dreadful work is done . . .
Scornful Voices from the Earth. If verily this *be* the Eternal's son—
Ador. Thou hearest. Man is grateful.
Zerah. Can I hear
Nor darken into man and cease for ever
My seraph-smile to wear?
Was it for such,
It pleased him to overleap
His glory with his love and sever
From the God-light and the throne
And all angels bowing down,
For whom his every look did touch
New notes of joy on the unworn string
Of an eternal worshipping?
For such, he left his heaven?
There, though never bought by blood
And tears, we gave him gratitude :
We loved him there, though unforgiven.
Ador. The light is riven
Above, around,

And down in lurid fragments flung,
That catch the mountain-peak and stream
With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the ground.
River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together wrung
Into one shape, and that is shapelessness:
The darkness stands for all.
Zerah. The pathos hath the day undone:
The death-look of His eyes
Hath overcome the sun
And made it sicken in its narrow skies.
Ador. Is it to death? He dieth.
Zerah. Through the dark
He still, he only, is discernible—
The naked hands and feet transfixëd stark,
The countenance of patient anguish white,
Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms which round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.
Ador. God! Father-God!
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant throne!
Uplift the lids of inward deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning Infinite.
Light up this dark where there is nought to see
Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son!
Zerah. God, tarry not! Behold, enow
Hath he wandered as a stranger,
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou
Appear for him, O Father!
Appear for him, Avenger!
Appear for him, just One and holy One,
For he is holy and just!

At once the darkness and dishonour rather
To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos rake,
And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blasphemies
With their made breath, this earth and skies
That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on him.
But him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt thou forsake!
Thy living and thy loving cannot slacken
Their firm essential hold upon each other,
And well thou dost remember how his part
Was still to lie upon thy breast and be
Partaker of the light that dwelt in thee
Ere sun or seraph shone;
And how while silence trembled round the throne
Thou countedst by the beatings of his heart
The moments of thine own eternity.
Awaken,
O right hand with the lightnings! Again gather
His glory to thy glory! What estranger,
What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust
Between the faithful Father and the Son?
Appear for him, O Father!
Appear for him, Avenger!
Appear for him, just one and holy one,
For he is holy and just!
Ador. Thy face upturned toward the throne is dark;
Thou hast no answer, Zerah.
Zerah. No reply,
O unforsaking Father?
Ador. Hark!
Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath.
Zerah. And by a sharper sound than death,

Mine immortality is riven.
The heavy darkness which doth tent the sky
Floats backward as by a sudden wind:
But I see no light behind,
But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,
And I know a shadow sad and broad
Doth fall—doth fall
On our vacant thrones in heaven.
Voice from the Cross. My God, my God,
Why hast Thou me forsaken?
The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me! the dreadful why!
My sin is on thee, sinless one! Thou art
God-orphaned, for my burden on thy head.
Dark sin, white innocence, endurance dread!
Be still, within your shrouds, my buried dead;
Nor work with this quick horror round mine heart.
Zerah. He hath forsaken *him.* I perish.
Ador. Hold
Upon his name! we perish not. Of old
His will—
Zerah. I seek his will. Seek, seraphim!
My God, my God! where is it? Doth that curse
Reverberate spare us, seraph or universe?
He hath forsaken *him.*
Ador. He cannot fail.
Angel Voices. We faint, we droop,
Our love doth tremble like fear.
Voices of Fallen Angels from the earth. Do we prevail?
Or are we lost? Hath not the ill we did
Been heretofore our good?
Is it not ill that one, all sinless, should
Hang heavy with all curses on a cross?
Nathless, that cry! With huddled faces hid
Within the empty graves which men did scoop
To hold more damnëd dead, we shudder through

What shall exalt us or undo,
Our triumph, or our loss.
Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.
Zerah. Hark, again!
Like a victor, speaks the slain.
Angel Voices. Finished be the trembling vain!
Ador. Upward, like a well-loved son,
Looketh He, the orphaned one.
Angel Voices. Finished is the mystic pain.
Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly forehead at the word,
Gleameth like a seraph sword.
Angel Voices. Finished is the demon reign.
Ador. His breath, as living God, createth,
His breath, as dying man, completeth.
Angel Voices. Finished work his hands sustain.
The Earth. In mine ancient sepulchres
Where my kings and prophets freeze,
Adam dead four thousand years,
Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan,
Aye his ghastly silence mocking—
Unwakened by his children's knocking
At his old sepulchral stone,
'Adam, Adam, all this curse is
Thine and on us yet!'—
Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
Wherewith they made his cerement wet,
'Adam, must thy curse remain?'—
Starts with sudden life and hears
Through the slow dripping of the caverned eaves.—
Angel Voices. Finished is his bane.
Voice from the Cross. FATHER! MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN.
Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
By wings of unclean spirits made!
They, in that last look, surveyed

The love they lost in losing heaven,
And passionately flee
With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they* are lifting
God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,
And the earthquake and the thunder,
Neither keeping either under,
Roar and hurtle through the glooms—
And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the dark, to disappear,
What time, from the splitting tombs
Gleamingly the dead arise,
Viewing with their death-calmed eyes
The elemental strategies,
To witness, victory is the Lord's.
Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear!
Zerah. I hear alone the memory of his words.

EPILOGUE.

I.

My song is done.
My voice that long hath faltered shall be still.
The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill
Into the common light of this day's sun.

II.

I see no more thy cross, O holy Slain!
I hear no more the horror and the coil
Of the great world's turmoil
Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—nor yell
Of demons sweeping past it to their prison.
The skies that turned to darkness with thy pain
Make now a summer's day;
And on my changëd ear that sabbath bell
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I—ah! what am I
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-darkened,
Seraphic brows of light
And seraph language never used nor harkened?
Ah me! what word that seraphs say, could come
From mouth so used to sighs, so soon to lie
Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace—of grace
Because of God! whether ye bow adown
In your own heaven, before the living face
Of him who died and deathless wears the crown,
Or whether at this hour ye haply are
Anear, around me, hiding in the night
Of this permitted ignorance your light,
This feebleness to spare,—
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart should dare
Shape images of unincarnate spirits
And lay upon their burning lips a thought
Cold with the weeping which mine earth inherits.
And though ye find in such hoarse music, wrought
To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying smile!
Ye know to pity, well.

V.

I too may haply smile another day
At the far recollection of this lay,
When God may call me in your midst to dwell
To hear your most sweet music's miracle
And see your wondrous faces. May it be!
For his remembered sake, the Slain on rood,
Who rolled his earthly garment red in blood
(Treading the wine-press) that the weak, like me,
Before his heavenly throne should walk in white.

A VISION OF POETS.

"O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power.
Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?
Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on."

BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
And in the forest wanderëd

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver, pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To foot-print o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE

The poet who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument:

Nor jarred it with his humour as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim;

Much less a lady, riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,
'What ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chace

'Of some fair Dryad of old tales
Who chants between the nightingales
And over sleep by song prevails?'

She smiled ; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. 'Now, nay,'
He answered, 'slumber passed away,

'Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.'

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake : 'The moon's regality
Will hear no praise ; She is as I.

'She is in heaven, and I on earth ;
This is my kingdom : I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.'

He brake in with a voice that mourned ;
'To their worth, lady? They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

'To their worth? Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

'The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief, whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

'Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets !—why should I be moved
In saying, both are more beloved?'

'The south can judge not of the north,'
She resumed calmly ; 'I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

'Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall.'

'As sweet,' the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, 'as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young;

'As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign:

'As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud.'

The lady answered, 'Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

'Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who having lived, dies well;
And wholly sweet the asphodel

'Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this.

'Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death, and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

'What, dost thou judge it a strange thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?

'Come on with me, come on with me;
And learn in coming: let me free
Thy spirit into verity.'

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went;
'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare
O'erswim the masses everywhere

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory! You may see
The trees grow rarer presently;
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with night,

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow:

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,
The star rays quiver while they strike.

'Drink,' said the lady, very still—
'Be holy and cold.' He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees: there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

'Drink,' said the lady, grave and slow—
'*World's use* behoveth thee to know.'
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and rushes
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime; the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

'Drink,' said the lady, sad and slow—
'*World's love* behoveth thee to know.'
He looked to her, commanding so;

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew: who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats but dimly scanned
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:
'Must I drink *here?*' he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek:

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'it so must be;'
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
'Behoves thee know *World's cruelty.*'

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth
As if from rivers of the south;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme:

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this;
His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread;
The moonshine seemed dishevellëd

In her sleek tresses manifold
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold:

But SHE was holy, pale and high
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

'Rise up!' said she with voice where song
Eddied through speech, 'rise up; be strong:
And learn how right avenges wrong.'

The poet rose up on his feet:
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament with vessels meet

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace;

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archëd roof,
And thence refracting eddied off
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poising its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where now in dark and now in light
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite:

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed,
In that pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by and overflowed

Till mist and marble seemed to blend
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The nichëd saints to come and go:

Alone amid the shifting scene
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God ; his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate and refrain
From vibratory after-pain,
And his brow's height was sovereign :

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes,
While at his side 'twixt lights and glooms
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar ; pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot nor to forget :

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirit seemed to sink in him—
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current: these were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were; of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sublime
With tears and laughters for all time!

Here Æschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did: he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips, that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the trees
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, with that gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmëd brows—
O poet-woman! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil: shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high:
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe and said 'No God'—

Finding no bottom: he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God: his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engenderëd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one: the Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo, who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm. And, not without
The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine; and grave Corneille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim:
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles they drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes: deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind. And Keats the real
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave
And salt as life; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar:

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone and yet intense;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard,

'*World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

'Harken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood: dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

'His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

'A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified—

'Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יברך)
Breathes back this music, folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

'And men walk in it, crying "Lo
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so:

'"The stars move statelier round the edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege:

'"No little flower but joys or grieves,
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves."

'So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth
To add another worth to worth—

'A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

'Now harken!' Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences:

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys: the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed:

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word:

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphroditè of sweet tune,

A Harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse:

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature; strong to pass:

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood,
Something of nature's fair and good:

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals
And burn in all their aureoles;

But she the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,
Like Nature with the showers around:

And when it ceased, the blood which fell
Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly:
'Tried poets, harken and reply!

'Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the jubilant,—

'If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance, and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

'If, as two colours must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

'If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly,—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

'If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian to make just
Their oracles and merit trust,—

'If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world must pale their lips
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

'If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

'Was shot to the heart o' the wood and lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

'From influent angels, must shut down
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

'If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

'Those temporal sorrows till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

'If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

'What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

'Or, O ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me
To make the world this harmony,

'Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?'
The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said 'Content.'

Content! it sounded like *amen*
Said by a choir of mourning men;
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying
And adoration, as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—'Lo, I call
To other hearts as liberal.

'This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

'Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

'What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift.'

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile ;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
As if the world were dispossessed,
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, an as he should faint ;
One shook his curls across his paint
And moralised on worldly taint ;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods ! or—not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro ;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony ;

And some composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear ;

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any ; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it ; one his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate
On trolling tongue of fate and fate ;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's ; one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips ; and one that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise ;

So with the rest : it was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all, in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—'Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,

'Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service to receive world's dole,
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

'Adjusted concords soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show:

'Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

'To give our hearts up? fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age;
It is not done on any stage.

'Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

'We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs; if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve:

'And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.'

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finishëd;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn,

Ay, jetted such brave fire that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely: they had passed.

And he our pilgrim-poet saw
Only their places, in deep awe,
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit:

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying, 'If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it:

'For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door
To pay shortcomings evermore.

'Accept me therefore: not for price
And not for pride my sacrifice
Is tendered, for my soul is nice

'And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

'I soar, I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud: so high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

'I ask no wages, seek no fame:
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

'I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use;

'I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance, but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain;

'Only project beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice and live on in its sound;

'Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past.'

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid;

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son:

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on: I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,
A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst:

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes, now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant in a mounting throng,
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds:

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened, with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision, as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward with a gradual gold,
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned;
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted slow:

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the ground;

The far wood-pines like offing ships;
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still;
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood
And prayed along the solitude
Betwixt the pines, 'O God, my God!'

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood
He prayed along the solitude,
'THOU, Poet-God, art great and good!

'And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,
"THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad."'

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart;
We press too close in church and mart
To keep a dream or grave apart:

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way, and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges and apply

Back to their song: 'twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word,

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark! a distant sound that grows,
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
A rustling murmur, not of those.

A breezy noise which is not breeze!
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children morning-bright,
With faces grave yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed; but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief said very mild,
'Hush! keep this morning undefiled.'

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres.
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
'What are your palms for?' 'To be spread,'
He answered, 'on a poet dead.

'The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

'Commands the palms; they must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town.'

I sighed and said, 'Did he foresee
Any such honour?' 'Verily
I cannot tell you,' answered he.

'But this I know, I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

'A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

'Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

'With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

'By the chief Poet. "God!" he cried,
"Be praised for anguish which has tried,
For beauty which has satisfied:

'"For this world's presence half within
And half without me—thought and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

'"I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world: both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

'"I am content to be so weak:
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

'"I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air

' "I laid my soul before Thy feet
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

' "I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image : let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

' "I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

' "Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter, Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

' "Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn and its scent outgive :
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

' "In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

' "*I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death." '

The child spake nobly : strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew ;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown :

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

'And so he died,' I whispered. 'Nay,
Not *so*,' the childish voice did say,
'That poet turned him first to pray

'In silence, and God heard the rest
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

'Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—"Come,"
He said, "come nearer! Let the bloom

' "Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

' "Come, kiss me!" So the one in truth
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth :

'And in that kiss of love was won
Life's manumission. All was done :
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

'But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness.'

The child's voice trembled, his lip shook
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

'And who,' I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, 'was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?'

'*I*,' softly said the child; and then,
'*I*,' said he louder, once again:
'His son, my rank is among men:

'And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy love may hallow fame.

'He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, "Come nearer:" and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumëd he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
'That poet now has entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

'And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner hopes.'

'But *thou*,' I murmured to engage
The child's speech farther—'hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage.'

'Glory to God—to God!' he saith,
'KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.'

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

'O young page,' said the knight,
'A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

'O brave knight,' said the page,
'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

'Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through;
And, in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

'The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought from these, o' the beechen-trees,
Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there while in Palestine
The warrior-hilt we drave.

'Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray!
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me
Wherein she passed away;
And I know the heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say.'

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free:
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly—

'Sir page, I pray your grace!
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

'And this I meant to say—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine;
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

'And this I meant to fear—
Her bower may suit thee ill;
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still:
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear
Than thy tongue for my lady's will!'

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head;
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,
Could blush more sudden red:
'Sir knight,—thy lady's bower to me
Is suited well,' he said.

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess dead before it,
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless,—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath,
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the dead than upon death.
Beati, beati, mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around;
Now it sweepeth back, away—
The uplands will not let it stay

To dark the western sun :
Mortui !—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past !
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

'A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servëd thee !
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me ;
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved or loved aright
Be the face of thy ladye.'

Gloomily looked the knight—
'As a son thou hast servëd me,
And would to none I had granted boon
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

'Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon,
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down ;
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame : I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won !

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud
Against a slanderer lying loud.
He rose up to defend.

'Oh, calm below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek above the marble grey
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied: the wretch was brave—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit:
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

'I would mine hand had fought that fight
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring
Forced on my life together.

Wail shook Earl Walter's house;
His true wife shed no tear;
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier:
Till—"Ride, ride fast," she said at last,
"And bring the avengëd's son anear!
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère."

'I came, I knelt beside her bed;
Her calm was worse than strife.
"My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wast not here
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife."

'I said, "My steed neighs in the court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under now
To free the pilgrim's shrine:
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
While I am in Palestine."

'In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

'My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
That the tears run down thy face?'—
'Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
Was in thy lady's case:
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place.

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,
A careless laugh laughed he:
'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be.'

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold—
'Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair.'

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
But passionate he spake—
'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
For one belovëd's sake!—
And her little hand, defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make!'

—'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.
Not dread for me but love for me
Shall make my lady pale;
No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil.'

—'But what if she mistook thy mind
And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling did entreat thy love
As Paynims ask for life?'
—'I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's honour lies.'
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still:
And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
'Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide.'
'Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
And keep thou at my side.'

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede.
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.'
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won;
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone:
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon,
For dread was the woe in the face so young,
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung
And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—
'Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see?

'Yet God thee save, and may'st thou have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.'

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek;
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her loved did speak:

How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman;
She stands amid them all unmoved:
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting?'—
'I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting;
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay the questing.'

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?'—
'Now search the lea and search the wood
And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him.'

'Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying!'—
'I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
'Twere better at replying!'
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through:
The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly,
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one?*

THE
LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

'ONORA, Onora,'—her mother is calling,
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,
'Night cometh, Onora.'

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—
'Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh—Onora!'

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
'Onora, Onora!'

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
'Onora, art coming?'—what is it she seeth?
Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
'My daughter!' Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:

'Now where is Onora?' He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
'At the tryst with her lover.'

But his mother was wroth: in a sternness quoth she,
'As thou play'st at the ball art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one
And will ne'er wed another?'

Then the boy wept aloud; 'twas a fair sight yet sad
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—'The saints know I lied
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide.
Must I utter it, mother?'

In his vehement childhood he hurried within
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
'Oh, she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin—

'The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,
Where no singing birds build and the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

'A nun in the east wall was buried alive
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

'I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

'At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

'Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
And a face turned from heaven?

'St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—"Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora:
The Tempted is sinning."'

'Onora, Onora!' they heard her not coming,
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning:

It touches her lips but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber;

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound
And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me;

And I know by the hills that the battle is done,
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.'

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss:
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought—
'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm and clear,
'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear:
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping!'

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:
She bowed down to kiss him: dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,
That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART.

A bed. ONORA *sleeping.* Angels, *but not near.*

First Angel.
Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?
Second Angel.
As bodies be.
First Angel.
And she so mild?
Second Angel.
As spirits when
They meeken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young, that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessëd thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love;
God's love for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this, not only her:
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled,
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!
The place is filled. [Angels *vanish.*

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to heaven
it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.

Is is a *thought.*

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good!
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep. Nay, let me dream at least.
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast:
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep. Nay, sweet fiend, let me go:
I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so!
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-yard stone,
Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight! they move at nights alone:
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,
'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!'

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied my word shall answer thine.
I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,
I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in:
What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand
Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in hand,
And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and kind,
Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause;
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed applause:
The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back afraid.
Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die—
I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company!
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!
The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain,
For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain:
Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed that day;
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were white in grave?
How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take,
That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken down to *him!*

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee:
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and weak.
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak:
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly fragments torn:
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,
We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmuring:
We heard them say 'Put day to day, and count the days to seven,
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of heaven:
And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her.'

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say—
'I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay!
Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of thee:
And if thou wilt forgo the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels be;
Nor bride shall pass, save thee' . . . Alas!—my father's hand's a-cold,
The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds,
This rosary brown which is thine own,— lost soul of buried nun!
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone,—
I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary, (dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love, my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead! Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through the night;
There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor:
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and, free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing;

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,
'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say;
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door:
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child?
He trembles not, weeps not; the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many!' he cried,
'But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom
For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom
As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother, 'The vileness is thine
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!'
Out spake the bride's lover, 'The vileness be mine
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine
And the charge be unprovëd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud:
Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!
—'O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY,
O my father belovëd!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall:
'So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,' quoth he,
'She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady.'

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train;
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her
And calmly knelt down on the high altar-stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven;
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead:
O shrive her and wed not!'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.'
In wrath, the bride's lover,—'The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear:
Be the charge proved or said not!'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—
'Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY!
Is it used for the praying?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest, 'Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying.'

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
They have knelt down together to rise up as one.
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did do, but still
He felt a power on him too strong for his will,
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinnëd,' quoth he, 'I have sinnëd, I wot'—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought:
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
They who knelt down together arise up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,
But for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide;
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride;
His lips stung her with cold; she glanced upwardly mute:
'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze while they chafëd him there
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her.

But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart:
She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
'Didst call me thine own wife, belovëd—thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching.'

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his mouth;
And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!
God, hear my beseeching!'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day:
Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge, the accursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying!'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

Onora looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
'I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk.
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,
Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below.
All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,
And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering:
The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine.'
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her head—
'The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,' she said:
'The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn away,
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—'And were it wisely done
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?
If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path from the wrong?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven times seven?
A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best!'

Then breaking into tears,—'Dear God,' she cried, 'and must we see
All blissful things depart from us or ere we go to THEE?

We cannot guess Thee in the wood or hear Thee in the wind?
Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light behind?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need Thee on that road,
But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not on "God."'

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever musëd thus,
'*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us*?'
But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside her knee,
—'Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word for me?'
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers bloomed no more.
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour before:
Both perished mute for lack of root, earth's nourishment to reach.
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out of each!

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,
Toll slowly.
And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the dead
When the rebecks are all done.

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the north side in a row,
Toll slowly.
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west a small river runs in haste,
Toll slowly.
And between the river flowing and the fair green trees a-growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey:
Toll slowly.
Through the rain of willow-branches I could see the low hill-ranges
And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,
Toll slowly.
While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

The Rhyme.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,
Toll slowly.
And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

There the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,
Toll slowly.
Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers fire
When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,
Toll slowly.
And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
And to-night was near its fall,

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered in the doors,

'May good angels bless our home.'

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile of youth

Did light outward its own sighs!

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward—the Earl,

Toll slowly.

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,

To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,

Toll slowly.

Unto both these lords of Leigh spake she out right sovranly,

'My will runneth as my blood.'

'And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins,' she said,

Toll slowly.

''Tis my will, as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,

But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

The old Earl he smilëd smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—

Toll slowly.

'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small

For so large a will, in sooth.'

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was cold and fine,—

Toll slowly.

'Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,

Toll slowly.

'He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.'

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly.

'Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,' quoth she,
'And he moans not where he lies:

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward'—

Toll slowly.

'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward!'

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty tread.

Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode amain:

Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued amain,

Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling, hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of might,

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,

Smiling out into the night.

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last: 'Nay,' she answered him in haste,—

Toll slowly.

'Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind.

Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!'

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered, down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,

Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry, 'Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!'

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—

Toll slowly.

'I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady Leigh,'

Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day,—

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its back,

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done, and, except the duchess, none,
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so grey of blee,

Toll slowly.

And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May!'

Toll slowly.

'Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

'Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound save that moaning of the hound?'

Toll slowly.

'Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

'Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,'—

Toll slowly.

'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

'Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a wife's name thee behove,'

Toll slowly.

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth;'

Toll slowly.

'He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
"I forbid you, I am loth!

'I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail,'

Toll slowly.

"Little hand and muckle gold" close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail.'

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

'Tower is strong and will is free: thou canst boast, my lord of Leigh,
But thou boastest little wit.'

In her tire-glass gazëd she, and she blushed right womanly:

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain, half her beauty was so plain,
—'Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!

Straight she called her maidens in—'Since ye gave me blame herein,'

Toll slowly.

'That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

'It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away:'

Toll slowly.

'Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and crown it fair,'

Toll slowly.

'I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's there!'

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west:

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate:

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there withal
With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon the stone,—

Toll slowly.

'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh, 'ill thou servest for a staff
When thy nobler use is done!

'Sword, thy nobler use is done! tower is lost, and shame begun!'—

Toll slowly.

'If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

'If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,'

Toll slowly.

'But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

'Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat and in the brake,'

Toll slowly.

'Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

'So, no more of this shall be! heart-blood weighs too heavily,'—

Toll slowly.

'And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

'Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,'

Toll slowly.

'Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

'These shall never die for me: life-blood falls too heavily:'

Toll slowly.

'And if *I* die here apart, o'er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

'When the foe hath heard it said—"Death holds Guy of Linteged,"

Toll slowly.

'That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessëd, blessëd thing

Shall the stone be at its head.

'Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,

Toll slowly.

'Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride

Whose sole sin was love of me:

'With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat,'

Toll slowly.

'And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head

While her tears drop over it.

'She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,'

Toll slowly.

'But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again

By the suntime of her years.

'Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,'

Toll slowly.

'That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!

Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange and dim,

Toll slowly.

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him.

'One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!'
Toll slowly.
'Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service worth the cost!'
Bold they stood around to swear.

'Each man clasp my hand and swear by the deed we failed in there,'
Toll slowly.
'Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!'
Pale they stood around to swear.

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!'
Toll slowly.
'Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,
Guide him up the turret-stair.

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height;'
Toll slowly.
'Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far:
He shall bear me far to-night.'

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so,
Toll slowly.
''Las! the noble heart,' they thought, 'he in sooth is grief-distraught:
Would we stood here with the foe!

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply, —

Toll slowly.

'Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must ride fast
As we wish our foes to fly.'

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors,
But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May repair:

Toll slowly.

'Tell me now what is your need,' said the lady, 'of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?'

Calm she stood; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe;

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday,'

Toll slowly.

'One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

'In the east tower, high'st of all, loud he cries for steed from stall:'

Toll slowly.

"He would ride as far," quoth he, "as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall."

'And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall'

Toll slowly.

'Wifely prayer meets deathly need: may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead
If he rides the castle-wall!'

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

'Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here is never a place for thee!'

Toll slowly.

'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—

Toll slowly.

'Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge no more what ladies do,
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke:

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the stair
For the love of her sweet look:

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,
Toll slowly.
Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her treading
Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.
Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,
Toll slowly.
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife, and the sweet saints bless thy life!'
Toll slowly.
'In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife.'

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun;'
Toll slowly.
'But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.

'Now by womanhood's degree and by wifehood's verity,
Toll slowly.
'In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

'By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,'
Toll slowly.
'If, this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

'So the sweet saints with me be,' (did she utter solemnly)
Toll slowly.
'If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*.'

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out bitter-well,—
Toll slowly.
'Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?'

She clung closer to his knee—'Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!'
Toll slowly.
'Mock me not, for otherwhere than along the greenwood fair
Have I ridden fast with thee.

'Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry kinsman's house:'
Toll slowly.
'What, and would you men should reck that I dared more for love's sake
As a bride than as a spouse?

'What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,'
Toll slowly.
'That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle wall?'

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against her suing,
Toll slowly.
With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing:

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands closed again.
Toll slowly.
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track
With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door,
Toll slowly.
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'
Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed and clung again,
Toll slowly.
While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shuddering lips half-shut;
Toll slowly.
Her head fallen as half in swound, hair and knee swept on the ground,
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-stone:
Toll slowly.
Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down:

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank bestrode,—

Toll slowly.

'Friends and brothers, save my wife! Pardon, sweet, in change for life,—

But I ride alone to God.'

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a flame,

Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sate in sight,

By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as one at rest,—

Toll slowly.

'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell in the beechwood's old chapelle—

But the passing-bell rings best!'

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw loose —in vain,

Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,

On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils curdle in,

Toll slowly.

Now he shivers head and hoof and the flakes of foam fall off,

And his face grows fierce and thin:

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go,

Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony

Of the headlong death below,—

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,' still she cried, 'i' the old chapelle!'

Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,

Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see,

Toll slowly.

Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD.
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode so fast that day,

Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy winnowings
Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passion ye would dash with a blind and heavy crash,

Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilled, now, your pulses are all stilled,
Toll slowly.
Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,
Toll slowly.
And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from your mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring,
Toll slowly.
Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take not wrong,
Toll slowly.
When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE
ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

'So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.'
WESTWOOD'S 'BEADS FROM A ROSARY.'

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow:
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses—'I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds:

He shall love me without guile,
And to *him* I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

'And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath:
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

'And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

'But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face:
He will say, "O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace!"

'Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, "Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand."

'Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say,
Nathless maiden-brave, "Farewell,"
I will utter, and dissemble—
"Light to-morrow with to-day!"

'Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

'Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
"Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?"

'And the first time I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—"Pardon,
If he comes to take my love."

'Then the young foot-page will run,
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
"I am a duke's eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee!*"

'He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds:
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,

And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not; but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done:
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon,
I am weary. I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

Lean thy face down; drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold:
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such.
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
'Child, be mother to this child'!

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turneth round!

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,
In a molten glory shrined
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul,
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering
When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.

Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,
And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
At the sight of the great sky:
And the silence, as it stood
In the glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud, and bud.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view!
How we talked there; thrushes soft
Sang our praises out, or oft
Bleatings took them from the croft:

Till the pleasure grown too strong
Left me muter evermore,
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,

And the far sound of your speech
  Did not promise any pain;
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
  As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
  What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so, do not shake,
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
  In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
  He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again.
Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee when he swore
  He would love but me alone?
Thou wast absent, sent before
  To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
  Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds
  Flying straightway to the light:
Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
Up the street! Is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

And that hour—beneath the beech,
When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain.

I fell flooded with a dark,
In the silence of a swoon.
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night; I saw the moon
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand,
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,
Somewhat coldly, with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
All was best as it befell,
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.

All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me. Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood!

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same;
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant verily to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
Treads the crocus under foot.
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,
Thou, like merry summer-bee,—
Fit that I be plucked for thee!

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns.
I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?

Some one might be waiting for
  Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—So angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet.
  When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
  And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, Sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
  On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
  I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

On that grave drop not a tear!
  Else, though fathom-deep the place
Through the woollen shroud I wear
  I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessëd one,
Thinking of me in the sun,
Or forget me—smiling on!

Art thou near me? nearer! so—
  Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
  Sweetly, as it used to rise
When I watched the morning grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said!
The hosannas nearer roll.
Mother, smile now on thy dead,
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up, through angels' hands of fire!
I aspire while I expire.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A Romance of the Age.

A Poet writes to his Friend. Place—*A Room in Wycombe Hall.* Time—*Late in the evening.*

Dear my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
o'er you!
Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely run
at will.
I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my head
before you:
You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are too
still.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she is
noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the
perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye to
trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her
hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by the
breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and
command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a
prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain.
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence to
pain?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other
things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my
abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their
door-ways ;
She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen were
she :
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile
on *me.*

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace,
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine ;
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and
the chalice :
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her : I was born to poet-uses,
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the
Muses ;
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,

I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that
raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;—'Will your book
appear this summer?'
Then returning to each other—'Yes, our plans are for the
moors.'
Then with whisper dropped behind me—'There he is! the
latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

'Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted though by
nature,
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you! and besides, he writes
no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural sting
behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among
them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched
my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-rung
them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and regnant
spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
them all—
'Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to confer it
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall?'

Here she paused ; she had been paler at the first word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—'I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,'
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, overflowed her mouth)
'But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first :
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human world, at worst.'

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer ; alternated light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessëd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind.

Oh, the cursëd woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet ;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark ;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches
Tò commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'er-float the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and laugh
of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them in
the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and
abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded, with
the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat,
And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her
going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to
float,—

With a bunch of dewy maple, which her right hand held
above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the
skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to
love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly; her lips have serious
sweetness,
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the cheek;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in
discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep
behind.
Spake she unto all and unto me—'Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their
mind.

'But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

'The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint:
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush!—a fancy quaint.

'Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers;
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:
While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

'That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low.
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.'

'Nay, your silence,' said I, 'truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these
British islands
Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds.
Soon we shall have nought but symbol: and, for statues
like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.'

'Not so quickly,' she retorted,—'I confess, where'er you go,
you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold
for honour clear:
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down
with Silence here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in in-
dignation;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her
lovers deemed her fair:
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted
station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny
air!

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their
vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward
move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be
warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning after
morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet.
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were
dogs for scorning—

To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through
the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of
sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along,
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in
the gowans,
With the forest green behind us and its shadow cast before,
And the river running under, and across it from the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it
bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our
own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the leaf is
folded down!

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut deep
down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my
making:
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are
speaking,
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you
drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round
us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the
breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland
singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is
divinest,
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the
tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the
notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell
them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced
in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars:
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where
we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always
thought them;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks
lightly,
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so
rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things, substance, shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in the corn,
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear;
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—'The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

'For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—"O the wondrous wondrous age!"
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

'Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane?

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical
white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the
mane?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-power
comprising,
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.'

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her, loved her
certes
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands;
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the
virtues,
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot Hope was
raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sate
alone:
Out, alas! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on grazing,
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with
sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many
suitors;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press
their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene,
For I had been reading Camöens, that poem you remember
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking
from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would over-
come it,
Springs up freely from his claspings and goes swinging in
the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it grew
longer,
Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine, you
would!'
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice; it was an earl's, of soul that
matched his station,
Soul completed into lordship, might and right read on his
brow;
Very finely courteous; far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes of less
expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows; unelastic lips which seem to taste possession
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by
his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art and letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks
that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help
the hearkening:
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within

Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all sides darkening,
And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake, for wealth, position,
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be done—
And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand!' he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied,
'Nay indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide.'

What he said again, I know not; it is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn,
'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born.'

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man,

From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad, inspired—say either! (anguish worketh inspiration)
Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when speared;
And I walked on, step by step along the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming,
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet and grew pale.
Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
In the presence of true spirits; what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers
Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands;
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others:
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships, all that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not to hold.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod:
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing;
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled.

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning.
That comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culminates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God, and nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God, the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-face
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn,
despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, for-
sooth,—
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your
mouth?

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less
earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I
am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain
upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and
you again,
Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and your
dishonour,
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need
not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of
tears.
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast had scarce
been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the
spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with
thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like
a call.

Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as
if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—'Bertram!' it
was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even with
queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full
hearing:
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
instead!'—

I had borne it: but that 'Bertram'—why, it lies there on the
paper
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge the
weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed drowning
in a vapour;
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made
desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow of
passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract
truth,
By a logic agonizing through unseemly demonstration,
And by youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of
youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely
I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was true,
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing
nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I
could do!—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me, friend, for weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like a stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring wheels of blackness:
When the light came I was lying in this chamber and alone.

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond* the gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I; 'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for me—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last gazes,
No weak moanings, (one word only, left in writing for her hands,)
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I am
abstemious.
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a
Phemius :
Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die *till
then*.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that
quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts
of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'Tis a dream—a dream
of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still and
pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self curses,
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes
that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning
torrid
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple
curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curvëd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

Said he, 'Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture!
Let the blessëd apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush, no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of Geraldine!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly:—
'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as *I*?'

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through this dream of THEE!

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,

'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her,

And she whispered low in triumph—'It shall be as I have sworn.

Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;

And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born.'

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

"Φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν, τεκνα;"
—MEDEA.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,

For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary,
'Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.'

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, "Get up, little Alice! it is day."
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens,' say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!

But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
"O ye wheels," (breaking out in a mad moaning)
"Stop! be silent for to-day!"'

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:

Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
"Our Father," looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*
We know no other words except "Our Father,"
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
"Our Father!" If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
"Come and rest with me, my child."

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.—1844.

'But, no!' say the children, weeping faster
'He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.'
'Go to!' say the children,—'up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! Let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore!
From its pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more;
Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the day before.

Nosegays! leave them for the waking;
Throw them earthward where they grew;
Dim are such beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto:
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath:
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth
While the young child dreameth on:
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wast thou in the garden yestermorn by summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, were the clouds away:
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,

As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it fade.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room:
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as they come.

Speak not! he is consecrated;
Breathe no breath across his eyes:
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him, father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess yourselves too weak?

He is harmless, ye are sinful;
Ye are troubled, he, at ease;
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him! but be blessëd by his peace, and go in peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

When ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
First the touch of Love did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
By the heartlight cast before,
And of all Beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door;
Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call;
Not a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall;
When the worst recorded change
Was of apple dropt from bough,
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
Than love's treason can seem now;—
Then, the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,
Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how ye must lie beneath them,
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said

A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail;
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead!

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago,
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know;
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena;
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry;
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly in his face;
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,
'Sweet, it hurts not!' How Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart;
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye read,
That this Death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail:
None, be sure can enter in

Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale—
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead !

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head !
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud.
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed : you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since, your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold ;
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy :
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divinest ye could utter
With less trembling in your prayers.

Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,
And your prayers go up in wail
—'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonized on cross?
Art thou reading all its tale?'
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead!

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,
And the drops will slacken so.
Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think: the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres:
Learn: the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope: with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love: the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work: make clear the forest-tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land.
Trust: the blessëd deathly angels
Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at hand!'
By the heart's wound when most gory,
By the longest agony,
Smile!—Behold in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
'My Belovëd, is it so?
Have ye tasted of my woe?

Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!'
He stands brightly where the shade is,
With the keys of Death and Hades,
And there, ends the mournful tale—
So hopefully ye think upon the Dead!

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,
Folded hills, the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,
Streams, with bosky trees along you,
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you
To your fellow flowers beneath you,
Flowers, that constellate on earth,
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
Self-answered so—
'Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills, that almost seem to drop
Stricken with a misty death
To the valleys underneath,—

Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

We walked beside the sea
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory—like the princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
Uttered with burning breath, 'Ho! victory!'
And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale:
So runs the Arab tale.

The sky above us showed
A universal and unmoving cloud
On which the cliffs permitted us to see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd:
And shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

Nor moon, nor stars were out;
They did not dare to tread so soon about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun:
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
And silence's impassioned breathings round
Seemed wandering into sound.

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever;
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
The slackened cord along:

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unforsook;
And, had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply each was sad.

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

'Do you think of me as I think of you?'
From her Poem written during the Voyage to the Cape.

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?'—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind
To reach across the waves friends left behind—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

It seemed not much to ask—'as *I* of *you*?'
We all do ask the same; no eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes that question over:
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

Love-learnëd she had sung of love and love,—
And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
She asked not,—'Do you praise me, O my land?'
But,—'Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?'

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.
Would God, her heart s more inward oracle
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response, 'We think of thee,'
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content, content with ocean's sound
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death?*

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We think of thee!'
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,

* Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood,
Of all the world! what are we that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues, verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you?

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow, a princely vow—to rule,
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness
And with the law and for the land—so God the vower bless!

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aislëd scene;

The priests stood stolëd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs
in theirs,
And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil ministers,
And so, the waiting lords and dames, and little pages best
At holding trains, and legates so, from countries east and
west:
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashed coro-
nets to light;
And so, the people at the gates with priestly hands on high
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty;
And so the DEAD, who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
There verily an awful state maintaining evermore;
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er
it be,
The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up to his knee,
The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her shroud
behind,
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than 'dust to dust'
can find,
The kings and queens who having made that vow and worn
that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown:
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them? what meaning can it
have?—
The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment and
the grave.
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair queen
had vowed,
The living shouted, 'May she live! Victoria, live!' aloud:
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
'The blessings happy monarchs have be thine, O crownëd
queen!'

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.

She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put away:
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows.
O lovely lady! let her vow! yea, let her vow to love!
And though she be no less a queen, with purples hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes for retinues about her sweetness wait.
SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—(the chosen at her side)
Let none say, God preserve the queen! but rather, Bless the bride!
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife she to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the queen! oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a *woman*, and *beloved!* and 'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the hand
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

And now, upon our queen's last vow what blessings shall we pray?
None straitened to a shallow crown will suit our lips to-day;
Behold, they must be free as love, they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity,

Long live she!—send up loyal shouts, and true hearts
pray between,—
'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O
crownëd queen!'

CROWNED AND BURIED.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word
Compáct of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

Napoleon!—Nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

Napoleon!—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem; children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call,
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs; and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries: and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,

Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it; kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing: then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

Napoleon!—even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon!—from the Russias west to Spain:
And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer: ay! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than her past:

For verily though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so much
As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream of all so won was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon !—twas a high name lifted high :
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

The kings crept out—the people sate at home,
And finding the long-invocated peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose :
The nations stood up mute to count their dead :
And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay, not so long ! France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse ;
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, 'Behold, thou England ! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—

'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim:
But ask a little room too—for thy shame!

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England, men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun:
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done! *

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four years' child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bide!'
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime

* Written at Torquay.

And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz!

Napoleon!—he hath come again, borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!*

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—and this he may: for dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world; and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!
But the *αυτος* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied:

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napoleon.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not: angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature,*
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.—1844.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
Leaping like a charger.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes;
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness;
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unweary,
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning;

This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow;
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing;
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations!

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly,

Blessing needs must straiten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessëd to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

Sleep on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing:
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in.
On your curls' full roundness stand
Golden lights serenely;
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly:
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half shut,
Slants the shining azure.
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So you lie and slumber:
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?

Nay, keep smiling, little child,
  Ere the sorrow neareth :
I will smile too ! patience mild
  Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss :
  I shall sleep though losing !
As by cradle, so by cross,
  Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us twain,
  Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
  As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
  Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
  Shall I sleep as soundly.
Differing in this, that you
  Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
  Given to my keeping :
Differing in this, that I
  Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
  Brighter to beholder :
Differing in this beside
  (Sleeper, have you heard me ?
Do you move, and open wide
  Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
That while you I thus recall
  From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
  With reveillie holy.

THE LOST BOWER.

In the pleasant orchard-closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we;
But 'May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.
Listen, gentle—ay, and simple! listen, children on the knee!

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade.

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that after climbing beateth quickly through content.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound;
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

For you harken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call

In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their 'All hail!'

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and the snow.*

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey;
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past dispute!

* The Malvern hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so:
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude:
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood:
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonied—I was gladdened unaware.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightning
All adown its silver rind ;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it was shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide :
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the walk !

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place ;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was inwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

As I entered, mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made before me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human creature
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn?
Or in mock of art's deceiving was the sudden mildness worn?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong
Who, surviving all that chancëd
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed Sabbath days?

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word:
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather felt than heard.

Softly, finely, it inwound me;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing: but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest riverhead.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth:
Oh, she leans on thorny tree
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemëd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamëd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird?—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—
Though my soul were nympholeptic
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards—such a silence followed it!

Heart and head beat through the quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower:
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair good-will.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus, fashioned half in
Chance and half in Nature's play,
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one ;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning !
This is truth in its pure grace !)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snowdrop, by the rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bŏwer of my romance—
That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair ;
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air,
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath;
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

But his sword of mettle clashëd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,
And her dreaming spirit flashëd
Through her body's fair white screen.
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys green:

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colone's olives swart.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked down.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother men!

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye perchance would look away;—
Ye would answer me, 'Farewell! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say.'

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower:
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great!

One who knew me in my childhood,
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes overcame!

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind;
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves:
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling of the leaves.

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'All is lost . . . and *won!*'

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF 'SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS,' ETC., TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine:
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered,
Nor too large were mouth of Titan
Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat:
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, 'O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!'

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink:
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed;

I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed:
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

Go,—let others praise the Chian!
This is soft as Muses' string,
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as his spring,
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet;
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly!
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly:
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek:
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep's-bell's tinkling noise
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for αι's and οι's.

Then, what golden hours were for us!
While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air!

How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled like vapour over shrines!

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarlëd oak beneath!
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace!

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—

Who forged first his linkëd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech:
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Atè
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading 'De Virginitate,'
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread!
And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake:
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow, slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
And more learned, and a man!
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level;
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sate in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine?

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
But those memories, to my thinking
Make a better œnomel;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

'Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath.'
POEMS ON MAN, BY CORNELIUS MATHEWS. *

WE are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
Which smiles with a change;
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found;
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore!

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther;
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again;
And we breathe out, 'O beauty!' we cry out, 'O truth!'

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.—1844.

And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline;
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul:
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around:
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God! trust us, man, love us, woman! 'I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,—
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for both.'
And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond;
And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet?

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect:
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
'While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.
Speed me, God! serve me, man! I am god over men;
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again;
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!'
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions,
Touch the bounds of our Being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,

Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
The sense of the mystical march:
And we cry to them softly, 'Come nearer, come nearer
And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung!'
And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison place;
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
Untired through the cloud
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts;
Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
And bringing our lives to the level of others
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
'Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!'

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
With a rush and a roar, and the speed of a dream;
And the car without horses, the car without wings,
Roars onward and flies
On its grey iron edge
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes:
And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,
We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they hearken and think
And work into harmony, link upon link,
Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
On the dark of eclipse.
Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion, the new generations that cry
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'
We are glorious forsooth,
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

Help me, God! help me, man! I am low, I am weak,
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins;
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains,
From my spirit's serene,

And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organized clay;
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away!
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the heaven-heights of truth.
Oh, the soul keeps its youth
But the body faints sore, it is tried in the race,
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold,
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
On, chariot! on, soul!
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

Love us, God! love us, man! we believe, we achieve.
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond;
We are glorious, and DIE:
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

—— discordance that can accord.'
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight:
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
'Till time for roses be,
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

'What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty!

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
'Before the rest are free,
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine!
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas:
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, 'Ha, snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wast enthronëd stately
All along my mountains lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?'

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say,
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, 'Verily and thus
It chances too with *us*
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches:

'Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart:
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimëd ringing?

'What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

'And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unpreparëd season?

'Drop, leaf! be silent, song!
Cold things we come among:
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit's inward burning)

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
Blessëd are we, natheless;
Blessëd still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi!*

'Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief-spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

'Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

'In prayers, that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

'In faith, that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition,—

'In hope, that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly,—

'In thanks, for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness!'

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A Fable.

Said a people to a poet—'Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine:
There's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine!'

The poet went out weeping ; the nightingale ceased chanting :
'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?'
—'I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.'

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft there ;
The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails :
And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

'THERE is no God,' the foolish saith,
But none, 'There is no sorrow,'
And nature oft the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow :
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raisëd,
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said, 'God be praisëd.'
Be pitiful, O God !

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming,
The beasts grow tame and near us creep,
As help were in the human ;
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
We spirits tremble under—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God !

The battle hurtles on the plains,
Earth feels new scythes upon her ;

We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest—honour :
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay—clay, and spirit—spirit.
Be pitiful, O God !

The plague runs festering through the town,
And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling :
The young child calleth for the cup,
The strong man brings it weeping,
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God !

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
And deep and strong it enters ;
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's :
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,
We cheer the pale gold-diggers,
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God !

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White horses !
The rich preach 'rights' and future days,
And hear no angel scoffing,
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God !

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the wine-cup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us:
We name delight, and pledge it round—
'It shall be ours to-morrow!'
God's seraphs, do your voices sound
As sad, in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God!

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us,
We look into each other's eyes,
'And how long will you love us?'
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless,—
'Till death us part!'—O words, to be
Our *best*, for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, O God!

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed:
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, 'Be stronger-hearted!'
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces;
They ask us, 'Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places?'—
We cannot speak;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,

And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God!

We pray together at the kirk
For mercy, mercy solely:
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest or glory.
Be pitiful, O God!

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations:
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.
Be pitiful, O God!

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
The sun strikes through the farthest mist
The city's spire to golden:
The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God!

And soon all vision waxeth dull;
Men whisper, 'He is dying;'
We cry no more 'Be pitiful!'
We have no strength for crying:

No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,
Look up and triumph rather—
Lo, in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father,
BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A PORTRAIT.

'One name is Elizabeth.'—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown,
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—'You have done a
Consecrated little Una.'

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
''Tis my angel, with a name!'

And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even, smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'
Ay and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTH.

LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
Than these words—'I loved ONCE.'

And who saith, 'I loved ONCE'?
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
Love, through eternity,
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name casting
A light too broad for blasting:
The great God changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, 'I loved ONCE.'

Oh, never is 'Loved ONCE'
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizëd friend!
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the end.

This is man's saying—man's : too weak to move
One spherëd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
By his No More, and Once.

How say ye, 'We loved once,'
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends, and would ye wrong each other so?
And could ye say of some whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
So long,—'We loved them ONCE'?

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say cold of me when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay,
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?
Not so! not then—least then! when life is shriven
And Death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in heaven,
Say not, 'We loved them once.'

Say never, ye loved ONCE :
God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and death,

For such a word. The eternities avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

And yet that same word ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once taught and led,'
Cripples once danced i' the vines, and bards approved,
Were once by scornings moved:
But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
And too low for heaven:
Hush! I talk my dream aloud,
I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn:
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,

Of a riven thunder-cloud,
  Veinëd by the lightning:
Use one with an iris-stain
  For the door so thin,
Turning to a sound like rain
  As I enter in.

Build a spacious hall thereby
  Boldly, never fearing;
Use the blue place of the sky
  Which the wind is clearing:
Branched with corridors sublime,
  Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb
  Following their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
  I will have my chamber;
Silence at the door shall use
  Evening's light of amber,
Solemnizing every mood,
  Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
  As I turn the key.

Be my chamber tapestried
  With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless, glorified
  When the sunbeams come here—
Wandering harpers, harping on
  Water stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
  With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
  From the chestnut-forest,
Bring a purple from the hill
  When the heat is sorest:

Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources,
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing,
(Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing) :
That shall be a morning-chair,
Poet-dream may sit in
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
While he sinketh catch it ;
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest thought
At the curfew-sounding ;

Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh,
'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly
As in April weather.
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Let them! Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel:
Love secures some fairer things,
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with THEE!

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty:
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk
To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one
That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven has won anew
A glory, in declining.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

Love's language may be talked with these;
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
A type which seemeth worthy

Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago
Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing
May feel them, with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made, renewing.

No flowers our gardened England hath
To match with these, in bloom and breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding,
(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden).

But here, all summers are comprised,
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine;
And every wind with stolëd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows:
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven!
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven!

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—

Oh, if her face she turnëd then,
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon!

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Belovëd friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing!

THE MOURNING MOTHER.

(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have?
That he, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—

And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still ofter,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

But since to him when living,
Thou wast both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone:
Sustain that exaltation,
Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion
Thy Blessëd in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to light and GOD!—
For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline,
With trees at lasting summer
That rock to songful sound,

While angels the new-comer
Wrap a still smile around.
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes!
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long;
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother!
Thy blind boy walks in light:
Ye wait for one another
Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his*.
Wait on, thou mourning mother!

A VALEDICTION.

God be with thee, my belovëd,—God be with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,
Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee

Looking equal in one snow ;
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas, I can but teach thee !
GOD be with thee, my belovëd,—GOD be with thee !

Can I teach thee, my belovëd,—can I teach thee ?
If I said, 'Go left or right,'
The counsel would be light,
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee ;
My right would show like left ;
My raising would depress thee,
My choice of light would blind thee,
Of way, would leave behind thee,
Of end, would leave bereft.
Alas, I can but bless thee !
May GOD teach thee, my belovëd,—may GOD teach thee !

Can I bless thee, my belovëd,—can I bless thee ?
What blessing word can I
From mine own tears keep dry ?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee ?
My good reverts to ill ;
My calmnesses would move thee,
My softnesses would prick thee,
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas, I can but love thee !
May GOD bless thee, my belovëd,—may GOD bless thee !

Can I love thee, my belovëd,—can I love thee ?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee ?
My love-kiss can deny

No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die!
May GOD love thee, my beloved,—may GOD love thee!

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

'To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.'
LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still!

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks – O world, they are not tears but dew.

THE LADY'S YES.

'YES,' I answered you last night;
'No,' this morning, sir, I say:
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

Call me false or call me free,
Vow, whatever light may shine,—
No man on your face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both;
Time to dance is not to woo;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies;
Guard her, by your truthful words
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

THAT DAY.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

The flowers of the margin are many to see;
None stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me.
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,—
My low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did, that day.

I stand by the river, I think of the vow;
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou!
I leave the flower growing, the bird unreproved;
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,—
And my lover that day?

Go, be sure of my love, by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers, by the blessings they win thee from Heaven;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's 'Götter Griechenlands,' and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ('De Oraculorum Defectu'), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.—1844.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

'Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'
Said the old Hellenic tongue,—
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung:
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay,
Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenchëd locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye;
For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunder-stroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye;
For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills:
Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,
Now Pan is dead!

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons, bound with his own vines;
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!
Ah, Pan is dead!'

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun:
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We *all* now are desolate
Now Pan is dead.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai, Adonis! at that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly;
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay, Pan is dead.

Crownëd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk afoot—
Since Pan is dead!'

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine:
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn:
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

Gods bereavëd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilëd Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

And the rowers from the benches
Fell, each shuddering on his face,
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross;
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss;
When His priestly blood dropped downward
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine;
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only,
Pan, Pan was dead,

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look;
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead,

Get to dust, as common mortals
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead,

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses
Through your falsehood at the True,—
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth,
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run :
Look up, poets, to the sun !
Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessëd mysteries ;
And a Priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration :
And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair : should we forgo it ?
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large : our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame, to stand in His creation
And doubt Truth's sufficiency !—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead !

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure,
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue, shall endure ;
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole;
Look up Godward; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul:
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
Pan, Pan is dead.

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

ON the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long: adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure;
Death is near me,—and not *you*.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you call, I ween
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but harkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!'

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
'Love, I love you,' as before,—

Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew:
They would truly
Be as duly
Love transformed to beauty's sheen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But, ah me! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan;
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen—'

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it!

Come, of latest love, to glean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

No reply. The fountain's warble
In the courtyard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

Will you come? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid,
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry, beneath the cypress green,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven.

Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

When beneath the palace-lattice
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there, that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
Here ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
'Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,'
Will you tremble
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this,
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn-high than these.
Miserere
For the weary!
Oh, no longer for Catrine
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
(I have loosed it from my hair) *
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly
Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But—but *now*—yet unremovëd
Up to heaven, they glisten fast;
You may cast away, Belovëd,
In your future all my past:
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS!
Death has boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

* She left him the riband from her hair.

SONNETS.

The Soul's Expression.

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

The Seraph and Poet.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory! heaven is high;
Sing, poet with the sorrow! earth is low:
The universe's inward voices cry
'Amen' to either song of joy and woe:
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally!

Bereavement.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
'Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!'—But I answered, Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

Consolation.

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind :
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
Crying 'Where are ye, O my loved and loving?'—
I know a Voice would sound, 'Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for earth?'

To Mary Russell Mitford.

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, 'These *flowers* I lay,'
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat
Thou, overleaning them this spring-time day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—'Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true
Though not as precious.' Thou art unperplext,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text!

On a Portrait of Wordsworth by B. R. Haydon.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist:
No portrait this, with Academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

Past and Future.

MY future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food:
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

Irreparableness.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

Tears.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving! lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing; at her marriage bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun

Grief.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

Substitution.

WHEN some belovëd voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count; not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew;
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God: nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

Comfort.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

Perplexed Music.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexëd minors: deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur, 'Where is any certain tune
Or measured music in such notes as these?'
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

Work.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

Futurity.

AND, O belovëd voices, upon which
Ours passionately call because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven to hold our idols: and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

The Two Sayings.

TWO sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast;
And by them we find rest in our unrest
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat,
God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet:
And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain
Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sustain!

The Look.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
No gesture of reproach; the Heavens serene
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way: the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
'I never knew this man'—did quail and fall
As knowing straight THAT GOD; and turnëd free
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

The Meaning of the Look.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say
'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon,
For all God's charge to His high angels may
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW *this man, let him be clear.*'

A Thought for a Lonely Death-Bed.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone, with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Pray then alone, 'O Christ, come tenderly!
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine!'

Work and Contemplation.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident control,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong;
While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

Pain in Pleasure.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering:
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

Flush or Faunus.

YOU see this dog; it was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear:
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
I started first as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove;
But as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

Finite and Infinite.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

An Apprehension.

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge; I should fear
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
In the free voice. O angels, let your food
Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear
What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face to face with God?

Discontent.

Light human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause, complaining on.
Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear submissive o'er the stormy main
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

Patience taught by Nature.

'O DREARY life,' we cry, 'O dreary life!'
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle! Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory: O thou God of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these!—
But so much patience as a blade of grass
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

Cheerfulness taught by Reason.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls; but since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
'Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee, God.'

Exaggeration.

We overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination (given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
To cover all the corn ; we walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers : near the alderbrake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of Grief !—holy herein,
That by the grief of One came all our good.

Adequacy.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Belovëd England, doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

To George Sand.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

To George Sand.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name: and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire!

The Prisoner.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

Insufficiency.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony:
But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak,
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.

Two Sketches.

H. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak;
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
'Methinks there's still some warmer place within.

A. B.

II.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee;
Her fair superfluous ringlets without check
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose; this sign outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to deck
Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it! such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

Mountaineer and Poet.

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to eminence
Ye are not great because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

The Poet.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune
And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

Hiram Powers' Greek Slave

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with enshackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
To so confront man's crimes in different lands
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

Life.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace?
I think this sudden joyaunce which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:
I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

Love.

We cannot live, except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life: and when we bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes there
We live most life, whoever breathes most air
And counts his dying years by sun and sea:
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,
The conscience and the concentration both
Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

Heaven and Earth.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."
Revelation.

God, who with thunders and great voices kept
Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
Which lasted half an hour!—lo, I who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years:
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan!

The Prospect.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view:
And thus, alas, since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch along
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

Hugh Stuart Boyd.*

HIS BLINDNESS.

GOD would not let the spheric lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.

* To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sate by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
To catch fair visions rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eves:
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.

Hugh Stuart Boyd.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

Belovëd friend, who living many years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
To visible nature's elemental cheers!
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
Because thou wast aweary of this one;—
I think thine angel's patience first was done,
And that he spake out with celestial tears,
'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
This soul that smiles in darkness!'
Steadfast friend,
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

Hugh Stuart Boyd.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes; now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn by tears; now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years agone
Entoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting-days!

THE END.

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
Edinburgh and London